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Narendra Nath Bhattacharyya

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Edited by Mrs. Nirmal Jain

to

my parents

Sri Bhupendranath

and

Smt. Tara Bhattacharyya

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

ABORI	*Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute.*
AI	*Ancient India.*
ARSIE	*Annual Report of South Indian Epigraphy.*
ASIAR	*Archaeological Survey of India, Annual Report.*
AV	*Atharvaveda.*
Br	*Brāhmaṇa.*
CHI	*Cambridge History of India.*
CII	*Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum.*
CWV	*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.
DKCV	*Das Kapital Centenary Volume*, Ed. Mohit Sen and M.B. Rao, New Delhi.
DN	*Dīgha Nīkāya.*
DRBV	*D.R. Bhandarkar Volume.*
EA	*Eastern Art.*
EI	*Epigraphia Indica.*
ERE	*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Ed. J. Hastings.
GS	*Gṛhya Sūtra.*
HB	*Dacca History of Bengal*, Ed. R.C. Majumdar.
HPEW	*History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western*, Ed. Radhakrishnan.
IA	*Indian Antiquary.*
IC	*Indian Culture.*
IHQ	*Indian Historical Quarterly.*
ISPP	*Indian Studies Past and Present.*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society.*
JAS	*Journal of the Asiatic Society.*
JABBRAS	*Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society.*

JBRS	*Journal of the Bihar Research Society.*
JKHRS	*Journal of the Kalinga Historical Research Society.*
JMU	*Journal of the Madras University.*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.*
MASI	*Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*
Mbh	*Mahābhārata.*
MI	*Man in India.*
MR	*Modern Review.*
OHRJ	*Orissa Historical Research Journal.*
Pan	*Pāṇini.*
RV	*Ṛgveda.*
San G.S.	*Sāṅkhyāyana Gṛhya Sūtra.*
Sat. Br.	*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.*
SBE	*Sacred Books of the East.*
SCT	*Śakti Cult and Tārā*, Ed. D. C. Sircar.
SII	*South Indian Inscription.*
SKACV	*S.K. Aiyangar Commemoration Volume.*
Taitt. Br.	*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.*
Taitt Saṃ	*Taittirīya Saṃhitā.*
Up	*Upaniṣad.*
VA	*The Vedic Age*, Ed. R. C. Majumdar.
Vāj. Saṃ	*Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā.*
YV	*Yajurveda.*

PREFACE

There are numerous works on different aspects of the cult of the Female Principle, but virtually nothing has as yet been written comprehensively on the history and historical role of the Śākta religion. The present work is therefore meant for filling up this lacuna in the study of the religious history of India.

Greater emphasis has been laid in this work upon the functional role of the Śākta religion in Indian society and life throughout the ages, because the study of any cult or religion in itself is of little significance unless it is used as a means to understand the vast and enormously complicated problems of social history. Here it has been shown how the role of Śāktism changed from time to time in accordance with the changing social demands, from the guiding principle or primitive hunting rituals and agricultural magics to that of the movement of national awakening, from the esoteric cults and practices arising out of the former to a liberal universal religion which had left a deep impress upon the latter. In between the two there were many turning points in each of which Śāktism was a driving force standing for something new, owing to its flexible nature which made it subject to various interpretation in different ages and by persons and sects belonging to a variety of ideas and beliefs. It will be significant to observe that throughout the ages the Female Principle stood for the oppressed peoples, symbolizing all the liberating potentialities in the class divided, patriarchal and authoritarian social set up of India, and this alone explains why attempts were made from different corners to blacken Śākta-Tāntric ideals.

The origin of Śāktism was spontaneous which evolved out of the pre-historic Mother Goddess cult symbolizing the facts of

primitive life. But its development was manifold—not through any particular channel—like a lot of streams, some big some small, issuing from a single source. Each of these streams and also their combined courses have been dealt with on the basis of the material mode of life providing the rationale for the types of religious beliefs and practices developing among peoples belonging to different cultural grades and on that of the diverse historical conditions under which the Female Principle made its way into other forms of Indian religious systems. The evidences which we derive from the temples and sculptural specimens and also from coins and other objects have been collated with those furnished by literary works and epigraphs to find out the process through which the tribal cults of the female deities were cleverly woven in the texture of the intellectual and rational scheme of the doctrines upheld by the higher religions.

Since the precise nature of the material culture and social institution of the early Indians is a question which the internal evidence is in itself too fragmentary to solve, it has been studied in the light of what is known of the surviving institutions and ideas, races and languages, beliefs and rituals and also from that of what we have been able to derive from the archaeological explorations and excavations. Important results have been obtained by applying this method to the understanding of the nature of evidence furnished by the Vedic literature. It has also been possible to form a clear idea of the post-Mauryan streams of the ancient Mother Goddess cult giving rise to Śāktism as a specialised religion by arranging the available materials systematically in a chronological set up. It has not been very difficult to deal with the history of the later and developed phases of the Śākta religion because there are numerous literary works supplying sufficient materials.

Now it is for my readers to judge how far I have been successful in this attempt. I crave the indulgence of my sympathetic readers for the mistakes and blemishes that must have crept into this book. In formulating some of my views I have been immensely helped by the works of V. Gordon Childe, E. O. James, O.R. Ehrenfels, R. Briffault, G.Thomson, D.P. Chat-

topadhyaya, and others. I am also grateful to Prof. D.C. Sircar, Prof. Niharranjan Ray, Dr. Amita Ray, Dr. Dilip K. Chakrabarti and Dr. Dipakranjan Das who have helped me in many ways. To my wife Manjula I am indebted for patient co-operation and very much else besides.

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1

INTRODUCTION: THE PRE-VEDIC ELEMENTS

Śāktism is a very important religion among the Hindus of the present day all over India. Those who worship the supreme deity exclusively as a Female Principle are called Śākta. Śakti is worshipped in various forms and numerous shrines are dedicated to her images in different parts of the country. The Śāktas conceive their Great Goddess as the personification of primordial energy and the source of all divine and cosmic evolution. She is identified with the Supreme Being, conceived as the source and spring as well as the controller of all the forces and potentialities of nature.

Nowhere in the religious history of the world do we come across such a completely female-oriented system. In its present form Śāktism is essentially a medieval religion, but it is a direct offshoot of the primitive Mother Goddess cult which was so prominent a feature of the religion of the agricultural peoples who based their social system on the principle of mother-right. The origin of the anomalous position of the male principle in the Śākta religion can presumably be traced to the anomalous position of the males in a matriarchal society.[1]

In primitive society, the clan centred in the women on whose responsibility rested the essentially important function of rearing up the young and of imparting to them whatever could be characterised as the human heritage at the pre-hunting stage. All cultural traits including the habits, norms of behaviours,

[1] For details see my *IMG*, 65 ff.

inherited traditions, etc. were formed by and transmitted through the females. The woman was not only the symbol of generation, but the actual producer of life. Her organs and attributes were thought to be endowed with generative power, and so they had been the life giving symbols. In the earliest phases of social evolution, it was this *maternity* that held the field, the life producing mother being the central figure of religion. This has been proved by the plentiful discovery of palaeolithic female figurines in bone, ivory and stone with the maternal organs grossly exaggerated.

With subsequent changes in the mode of food-gathering and food production, father-right elements began to be imposed upon the social structure step by step. Side by side increased knowledge about the function of the male in the process of generation also introduced a male element in the cult of the Mother Goddess. The male partner was at first supplementary because his precise function in relation to conception and birth was less obvious and less clearly understood. With the concentration of creative energy in the Male Principle as the begetter, the Mother Goddess tended to lose her dominance and prestige. The male element was introduced at first as her insignificant lover, but at length he became the co-equal and eventually the predominant partner.

But where agriculture predominated over hunting in providing food, it accordingly raised the status of women, because agriculture was their invention and business, at least till the introduction of the cattle-drawn plough. Thus among the peoples that discovered agriculture, there was a revival of ancient mother-right. Where the transition from hunting and food-gathering to higher forms of productions was marked by an extensive development of primitive agriculture, the influence of the life-producing mother as the central figure of religion was extended to the vegetable kingdom. Mother Earth thus became the womb in which crops were sown. She continued her glorious career among the agricultural peoples till the rise of the essentially male-oriented religions. Later on, however, her position declined, due to the changes in the mode of production and the growth of patriarchal societies, but her cult could not be eradicated completely from the lives of the masses.

But in the religious history of India, Mother Goddess never ceased to be an important cult of the peoples. It was so deep-rooted in Indian mind that even in the sectarian religions like Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc. the Female Principle had to be given a very prominent position. Even the basically atheistic religions like Buddhism and Jainism could not avoid this popular influence. Later Buddhism is, in fact, nothing but a disguised Tantric cult of the Female Principle. Among the vast masses of Indian peasantry male deities have only a secondary position. Indeed, a predominantly agricultural country like India, with her stunted economic development accounting for the strong survival of tribal elements, is only likely to be full of matriarchal relics, and this explains the cause of the popularity and survival of the idea of the Female Principle. Baron Omar Rolf Ehrenfels,[1] to whom goes the credit of collecting all the matriarchal data and organising them in a theoretical set up, observes that mother-right elements in India are stronger, both in extent and in degree, than those in any part of the world and that, in spite of the ruthless efforts to establish male-superiority through hypergamy, child-marriage and *satī* (burning of widows), mother-right elements could not be stamped out from the lives of the masses. Such extravagant means of breaking the resistence of mother-right was called for, parallels of which are, according to Ehrenfels, scarcely to be found anywhere else in human history.

The special vigour to overthrow mother-right must have necessarily implied a corresponding special vigour which mother-right must have been enjoying in India since pre-Vedic days. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya[2] whose contribution to the study of Indian mother-right is really significant after the work of Ehrenfels, has treated the problem from a strictly economic point of view and argued that, if the undeveloped agricultural economy had a natural tendency to create matriarchal society and if by far the largest proportion of the Indian masses remained predominantly agricultural, it was but logical that the most extravagant methods would have been necessary to coerce upon them the supremacy of the male. He holds that, because

[1] *MRI*, 18ff; see especially 121-29, 201-4.
[2] *L*. 232 ff.

agriculture was the discovery of women, the initial stage of agricultural economy created the material conditions for the social supremacy of the female. Thus mother-right in India was historically connected with the early agricultural economy and that was, in all probability, violently suppressed in subsequent days. Yet the peculiar tenacity with which the elements of mother-right have survived in the lives of the Indian people is quite striking. The probable reason is that the majority of them still remain the tillers of the soil. By contrast, the economic life of early Vedic people was predominantly pastoral. This accounts for their highly organised patriarchal society with a characteristically male dominated world-outlook. It is here that we have the real clue to the basic difference between the two main currents of the subsequent religio-philosophical thought in India, the Vedic and the non-Vedic.

The material mode of life of a people ordinarily provides the rationale for the type of deity and the manner of worship prevalent in a given society. This accounts for the extensive development of the cult of Mother Earth among agricultural peoples. Rituals based upon fertility magic must have played a very significant part in the agricultural societies. "So long as they have pasture, cattle feed and breed of themselves, but by comparison with cattle raising the work of tilling, sowing and reaping is slow, arduous and uncertain. It requires patience, foresight, faith. Accordingly agricultural society is characterised by extensive development of magic."[1] The magical rites designed to secure to fertility of the fields seemed to belong to the special competence of the women who were the first cultivators of the soil and whose power of childbearing had, in primitive thought, a sympathetic effect on the vegetative forces of the earth.[2] "The fertility of the soil retained its immemorial association with the women who had been the tillers of the earth and were regarded as the depositaries of agricultural magic."[3] Peoples of the past instinctively projected their own experiences into the objects around them and thus associated

[1] Thomson, *AA*, 21-22.
[2] Frazer, *GB* (ab), 11-82, 399-423.
[3] Briffault, *M*, III, 117.

various ideas in order to constitute a practical philosophy of life, making unconscious use of the only principle available to them, *viz.* the principle of analogy. Thus, they came to the conclusion that natural productivity should be viewed in terms of human productivity, earth-mother in terms of human mother.

"The identification of earth with woman, writes Briffault, "pervades the thought of all stages of culture, and pages could be filled with illustrations of the universal equation."[1] The same preconditions which fertilise women are also thought to fertilise Mother Earth. This explains why in different parts of the world Mother Earth is believed to menstruate and why there are so many rites and customs in which all fluxes of blood are treated alike as manifestation of life-giving power inherent in the female sex.[2] The conception of the Earth Mother is as varied as the degrees of culture, or rather cultures, attained by separate communities of mankind, and this can be shown with reference to the various types of the Mother Goddess cult prevailing in different regions of the ancient world. "So intimate appeared to be the relation between the processes of birth and generation and those of fertility in general that the two aspects of the same 'mystery' found very similar modes of ritual expression under prehistoric conditions."[3] Of such 'ritual expressions' the erotic rites are really significant, for they are employed as expedients to increase the generative powers of nature represented by the Earth or primitive Mother Goddess. To bring natural productivity under control, the primitive people attached supreme importance to the human generative organs and employed sexual union, or its imitation, as a means to achieve their end. The worship of *liṅga* and *yoni*, i.e. the male and female organs, was nothing but a development of such erotic rites of fertility, the former symbolising the act of cultivation and the latter, the fruit-bearing earth. This explains the economic basis of the origin of the Tantric sex rites. The principles of Tantricism are more or less universal, and there is a considerable degree of unity among men in respect of such beliefs

[1] *Ibid*, III, 56.
[2] See my *IPR*, 8-19. also *IMG*, 15-18.
[3] James, *PR*, 172.

and rituals. In fact, erotic practices associated with the goddess-cult appear to be older than the Tantric texts themselves.

In 1916, six years before the dramatic discovery of Mohenjedaro, R.P. Chanda,[1] wrote, "For the conception of a godhead analogous to that of the Śākta conception of the Devī we should travel beyond the countries dominated by the Vedic Aryans and the Avestic Iranians to Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and other countries bordering on the Mediterranean. There is a strong resemblance between the Indian Śākta conception of Śakti and the Śākta ritual of the followers of Vāmācāra and Kulācāra, who practised ceremonial promiscuity on the one hand, and the Semitic conception of Astart, the Egyptian conception of Isis, and the Phrygian conception of Cybele, on the other." In the Śākta scheme of cosmogonical process, the unmanifested *prakṛti* alone existed before creation. She wished to create, and having assumed the form of the Great Mother, she created Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva out of her own body. Referring to the Mother Goddess cult of Mohenjodaro, Marshall,[2] rightly observes that, in the later Śākta phase of the primitive Mother Goddess cult, the Devī is transformed into the eternally existing all powerful Female Principle, the *prakṛti* or *Śakti*, and having associated with the male principle, the *puruṣa*, she becomes Jagadambā or Jaganmātā, the mother of the universe, the creator of the gods. In her highest form she is Mahādevī, the consort of Śiva but, in spite of her being the consort of the latter, she is his creator. In Asia Minor and round the shores of the Mediterranean are found many examples of Mother Goddess with a young subordinate god by her side. "In Punic Africa, she is Tanit with her son ; in Egypt, Isis with Horus; in Phoenicia, Astaroth with Tammuj (Adonis); in Asia Miner, Cybele with Attis; in Greece (and especially in the Greek Crete itself), Rhea with Young Zeus. Everywhere she is *unwed*, but made the mother first of her companion by immaculate conception, and then of the gods and of all life by the embrace of her own son. In memory of these original facts her cult (especially the most erotic mysteries of it) are marked by various practices and observances symbolic to the negation of

[1] *IAR*, 148-49.
[2] *MIC*, I. 48ff.

true marriage and obliteration of sex.[1]

Such stories of Virgin Goddesses are the *relics* of an age when the father had no significance at all and of a society in which man's contribution to the matter of procreation was hardly recognised. But the stories are found in the *written records* of ancient civilizations. From these records it appears that the earlier peoples were worshippers of the Earth Mother, the Creatrix, the goddess whose moods were reflected by natural phenomena, whose lovers were the spirits of season, and whose qualities were specialised by the later goddesses. The story of the annual death and resurrection of the lover of the goddess, found in the agricultural mythologies, is suggestive of the death and revival of plant life in the annual cycle of seasons.[2] But the period surveyed by the *written records* is at best about a fragment of the time during which men have been active on this earth. So we are to depend on prehistoric archaeology, one of the principal aims of which has been to define the social traditions expressed in the material cultures. The archaelogical finds, however, do not tell by themselves how the men of some particular period actually lived. To reconstruct that way of life needs comparative study of many different primitive tribes still surviving in out-of-the way places.

The food-gathering economy, corresponding to what Morgan terms *savagery*, provided the sole source of livelihood open to any human society during the major period of its early history. This period of *gathering* economy is called *Palaeolithic* or *Old Stone Age* by the archaeologists and *Pleistocene* by the geologists. Food gathering economy is still current among a few backward and isolated societies in the jungles of Malaya, Central Africa and India and in the deserts of north western Australia and South Africa, and in the Arctic regions. In the archaeological record modern men appear in the Upper Palaeolithic, evidently better equipped than any group so far distinguished in Lower or Middle Paleolithic times. Economically Upper Palaeolithic societies must be designated *savage* in as much as they relied for a livelihood on hunting, fishing and collecting,

[1] Hogarth in *ERE*, I, 147.
[2] For details see my *IMG*, 7 ff.

but their methods and equipment had undergone an almost revolutionary improvement.[1]

In the Punjab and its adjoining regions, Palaeolithic assemblages of implements characteristic of both the chopper-chopping tool and the hand ax-Levallios flake complexes are found. The former, called the Sohanian, or Soan, has been reported from five successive horizons, each of which yields pebble tools associated with flake implements. Massive and crude in the earliest phases of the Sohanian, these reveal a progressive refinement in the younger horizons. In part contemporary with the Early Sohanian is a series of hand axes of Abbevilleo-Acheulian affinities which occur in profusion at many sites in India from the Gujarat region in the north to Madras in the south. The sites yield hand axes, cleavers and flake tools, very reminiscent of assemblages from south and east Africa.

Traces of the transitional Mesolithic cultures (a term not now in fashion) which succeeded the Paleolithic are noticed in many districts of South India and in various sites of Gujarat and Punjab. Peoples of this transitional period were still in the hunting stage. All the implements used were primarily of stone, although bone was not rare, but the nature of the tools was somewhat different. Excavations at Gujarat have yielded a number of human skeletons, the crouching posture in which they have been found leaves no doubt that they were deliberately buried, with a definite idea of orientation. It appears that the Mesolithic societies had further elaborated the spiritual equipment already vaguely attested among the Palaeolithic societies.

The term 'Neolithic' is exceedingly difficult to define and determine, since the transition from food gathering to food production was not certainly a uniform and orderly sequence of events. The Neolithic cultures of India, though not corresponding to a fixed period of time, at least in the economic sense, are so far indicated by the stone tools bearing unmistakable signs of polish found in several districts of South India and also in different areas of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Kashmir, West Bengal, south-eastern Bihar and Orissa. The Neolithic peoples understood the use of fire, made pottery, cultivated grain and domesticated animals. This new food-producing economy is

[1] Childe, *WHH*, 27-47.

distinctive of what Morgan calls *barbarism*. It was the Neolithic society that could potentially increase the supply to support a growing population, and this was a *revolution* distinguishing barbarism from savagery.

In a hunting society a special relationship generally develops between man and animal which leads its members to perform certain rites, religious or magical, to ensure the prey in the next hunting expedition, or for other related ends. "Before the adoption of agriculture and herding, when a precarious existence was eked out on the chase and edible fruits, roots and berries, the animal and vegetable species which formed his staple diet acquired a sacred character and significance. With this he endeavoured to establish efficacious relations through a prescribed ritual procedure performed by experts in carefully secluded sanctuaries set apart for the purpose in the awe-inspiring surroundings and conditions calculated to produce a sense of the numinous."[1] Similar was also the process behind the worship of the Mother Goddess. The Gravettians, for example, used to carve little figures of women out of stone or mammoth ivory, or model them in clay and ash. The Venus figures (a term coined by the archaeologists) had no faces, but the sexual characters were always emphasised. They were surely used in some sort of fertility ritual to ensure the multiplication of game. Very probably these peoples grasped the generative function of women, and sought magically to extend it to the animals and plants that nourished them.

The religious beliefs and practices of the food-gatherers were modified according to the new social ideals introduced by the Neolithic revolution. Magic must have still been practised in order to ensure the fruitfulness of the earth, despite the enlarged real control over nature, thus introducing agricultural rituals in addition to those connected with hunting. Most Neolithic societies buried their dead with still more pomp and social effort than had the Palaeolithic hunters. The Upper Palaeolithic graves, in different parts of the world, were furnished with food, implements and ornaments; often the bones are found reddened with ochre. To paint bones with the ruddy colouring of life was the "nearest thing to mummification which the palaeolithic

[1] James, *PR*, 174.

peoples knew; it was an attempt to make the body again serviceable for its owners use."[1] In Neolithic societies the purpose of burial was changed. That the dead so reverently deposited to the earth was supposed somehow to affect the crops that sprang from the earth and was probably brought in relation to the existing Mother Goddess cult, the Earth Mother thus becoming the guardian of the dead, connected alike with the corpse and the seed-corn beneath the earth.[2] The Neolithic goddess was not simply the life-producing mother. The earth from whose bosom the grains sprout was imagined as a goddess who might be influenccd like a woman by entreaties and gifts as well as controlled by imitative rites and incantations. Female figurines were moulded in clay or carved in stone or bone by Neolithic societies in Egypt, Syria, Iran, all round the Mediterranean and in south-eastern Europe. These figurines were undoubtedly the direct ancestress of the images of admitted goddesses made by historical societies in Mesopotamia, Syria, Greece and other countries.

Nothing specific can be said about the Palaeolithic and Neolithic Mother Goddess of India, simply because the data are much too meagre. So the picture has to be restored from conjecture and reasoning based upon reports of observations all over the world. There is no reason to believe that the early developments in India took any course materially different from those of other countries. Secondly, the countryside at large and Indian religious systems carry unmistakable mark of their primitive origins because primitive modes of life have been and are still possible in many parts of India. The survival within different social layers of many forms permit the reconstruction of the totally diverse earlier stages. The backward, inefficient and local nature of agricultural production has allowed so many older tribal groups to survive. The lower castes in the present-day Hindu society often preserve tribal rites, usages and myths. This is due to the fact that, although the theoretical system is roughly that of four classes, the observed castes and sub-castes, innumerable in number, are derived from tribal groups of different ethnic origin.[3]

[1] Macalister, *TEA*, I, 502

[2] *cf*, Piggott, *PI*, 127.

[3] Kosambi, *CCAI*, 14ff.

A study of the surviving tribal religions and of the tribal survivals as found in the Hindu religion in general naturally provides us with a clue to the understanding of the degree and extent of the Paleolithic and Neolithic cults.[1] Such survivals are mainly concerned with the cult of a Mother Goddess. As we have pointed out previously, the Neolithic cultures of India did not correspond to a fixed period of time. Prehistory survived late in some parts of India when other areas within the same country were already developing higher cultures. In the literary records of such advanced peoples, evidently belonging to different period of time, we come across references to peoples who were still in the food-gathering or in the primitive food-producing stage and to their Mother Goddess who was conceived as a Śabara or Kirāta woman, fond of wine and meat.[2]

However, the growth of Neolithic population was eventually limited by contradiction in the new economy. "The worst contradictions of the Neolithic economy," says Childe,[3] "were transcended when farmers were persuaded or compelled to wring from the soil a surplus above their own domestic requirements, and when the surplus was made available to support the new economic classes not directly engaged in producing their own food." The social surplus was used to support a new *urban* population of specialised craftsmen, priests, officials, merchants, etc., and was thus concentrated in the hands of a relatively narrow circle. The *urban revolution* was facilitated by the discovery of copper and bronze. A metal tool is more durable than one of stone. It can be resharpened and recast, the new one turning out as good as the old. The adoption of metal tools made room for a new class of craftsmen, the practical bearers of the scientific traditions of barbarism, that had no place in a pure Neolithic economy. After the magicians they were probably the first class to be withdrawn from direct food production. The adoption of metal tools at the same time destroyed the self-sufficiency distinctive of Neolithic economy.

The Bronze age was initiated in the alluvial valleys of the

1 This has fully been dealt with in my *IMG*, 45-64.

2 *Mbh.*, IV. 6; *Harivaṃśa*, LVIII; *Gauḍavaha*, 305ff *Varāha Purāṇa* XXVIII, 34; *cf.*, *IMG*, 115-19.

3 *WHH*, 69.

Nile, the Tigris-Euphrates and the Indus about five thousand years ago, with the transformation of some riverside villages into cities. It is now known that village farming communities existed in the Indus valley as early as the fourth millennium BC. The original complexion of their assemblages resembled those of Iran (and perhaps those of the Ubaidian imprint on southwestern Iran), but the complexion gradually changed to something characteristic of the Indus valley itself and evidently culminated in the Harappan urban civilization.[1]

The connexion between the growth of agriculture and the origin of the village communities, as we have seen above, accounts for the popularity of the goddess cult. All the world over, the earth-spirit is generally regarded as female, and the presiding deities of agriculture are mainly goddesses, because the idea of fertility and reproduction is connected with woman. The Zhob as well as the Kulli sites have furnished a fair number of terracotta figurines. It is in these figurines that we recognise the earliest embodiment of the primitive Mother Goddess in Indian context. The figurines of the Kulli culture finish at the waist in a splayed pedestal, arms bent with hands on the hips, breasts usually shown, eyes fashioned from small stones, hair elaborately dressed, ornamented by oval pendants resembling cowrie-shells, and bangles on arms and wrists. In the Zhob valley sites the same type of female figures recurs with necklaces, large and beak-like noses, hooded heads, exaggerated breasts, circular eye-holes, and slit mouths.[2] That they had a fertility significance is shown by the representation of the cowrie-shells and by that of a phallus carved in stone at the mound of Moghul Ghundai near the left bank of the Zhob river and at the neighbouring mound of Periano Ghundai on the right bank of the river where a *yoni* is depicted with great prominence.

To some extent the Zhob and Kulli cultures appear to coincide with each other in certain phases of development and to overlap in their latest phases with the Harappan culture of the Indus valley. The Harappan culture indicates a revolutionary change from the isolated peasant communities to the large and highly organised urban settlements. Remains of the Harappan settle-

[1] Childe, *NLMAE*, 197-203.
[2] Stein, *ATWNB*, 38ff; *ATG*, 37ff.

ments stretch from the Makran Coast to Kathiawar and northwards to the Himalayan foothills, and what impresses the observer is the *complete uniformity* among the objects found in this vast area which implies the existence of a strong and centralised authority regulating the life and activities of the people over this extensive region.

The Harappan society was a class society. Within the urban population itself architectural remains reveal differences of wealth. Concentration of social surplus by a divine monarch, or a small priestly caste, may be deduced from a strongly walled citadel unearthed at Harappa. The monotonous rows of mud brick tenements contrast glaringly with the spacious two-storyed houses comprising courtyards, bathrooms, many apartments, and often a private well, that accommodated what may be termed the Harappan bourgeoisie.

The Indus and its tributaries served as moving roads for the transport of heavy goods. Foodstuffs were collected from a wide area to support large urban populations. The cities of Harappa and Mohenjodaro sheltered a mixed population, the major section of which came from the adjacent villages to seek fortune in the great cities. They also brought with them their own cults and rituals, evidently inspired by ancient matriarchal ideas of agricultural communities, which formed the basis of Harappan religion. Some of the cults and rituals of the simpler peoples were adopted by the higher, but not in the original unsophisticated form. They were given aristocratic colour, which is evident from the contrast presented by the two traditions of plastic art, one in terracotta and the other in stone and bronze. The former represents a popular plastic idiom of the simpler people, perhaps following the terracotta tradition of the peasant cultures of Kulli and Zhob, while the stone and bronze sculptures represent an art of the higher section of the people, already sophisticated because of their elevated position in the society. "The distinction in the art idioms was, in all probability, due to class distinctions which appear to have emerged as a result of the predominant commercial economy that provided the mainstay of this civilization."[1]

The Indus civilization shows close resemblances on the one

[1] Saraswati, *SIC*, 8-9.

hand with that of early Sumer and Babylonia (especially with the proto-or pre-Sumerian of Kish) and on the other with that of historic India. Its dating depends on comparison with vestiges of similar architectural and sculptural remains in Mesopotamia and on the discovery of objects of Indian type in pre-Sargonid and Sargonid sites. Indic seals have been found at Ur, Kish and Tall-al-Asmar datable from about 2500-2350 BC so that the beginnings of the Indus Civilization have been fixed in the middle of the third millennium BC.

Since the Indus manufacturers were imported into Sumer and Akkad, and Indic cults were actually celebrated there, Childe held that "the forgotten civilization must have made direct if undefinable contributions to the cultural tradition we inherit through Mesopotamia."[1] Marshall also stressed upon a common cultural bond between the Indus valley and the west. What was the exact nature of this cultural bond is not very clearly known to us, but it may be inferred that religiously these civilizations had something in common. The Sumerian Mother Goddess, whose qualities were later absorbed by Nana of Uruk, Nina of Nineveh, Inanna of Erech, Bau of Lagash, Ninlil of Nippur, Annuit of Akkad, Zarpaint of Babylon, etc. belonged to the same category of the Harappan *Magna Mater* whose attributes were also specialised by various goddess of the historic age. Some of the aforesaid deities had evidently an eastward migration in subsequent ages. The goddess Inanna, also known as Nana, Nanai, etc. who was supposed to be the mother of Attis and identified with Ishtar, Astarte, Artemis, Anaitis and Aphrodite, was able to extend her cult into India through the Scythians and Kuṣāṇas in later times. Examples are the Naina Devi of the Kulu Valley, Sirmur and Bilaspur, Bibi Nani of Baluchistan, Naini Devī of Nainital, etc.[2] Goddesses of the Ishtar group (Ishtar, Astarte, Astaroth, Atargatis, etc.) might also have contributed something to the later Tantric conception of Tārā, as is indicated by the similarity of their names.

Many of the Mother Goddess figurines from Mohenjodaro are painted with red slip or wash[3] as in ancient Egypt, Meso-

[1] *WHH*, 129.
[2] Hutton, *CI*, 152; Cunningham, *ASR*, VI, 157.
[3] Mackay, *FEM*, I, 349; Marshall, *MIC*, I, 341.

potamia and Malta[1] but those from Harappa retain no trace of paint.[2] The goddesses wear a distinctive headdress which rises from the back of the head, in some cases directly from the head, while in others it forms part of the coiffure. The Goddess is significantly nude save for a very short skirt round the waist secured by a girdle. The figurines, as a rule, are burdened with jewellery consisting of elaborate neck collars, long chains, armlets, bangles, anklets, ear-rings etc. The Harappan figurines do not represent mere busts, as the Kulli and the Zhob figurines do, but are modelled with legs and hands, showing a variety of positions. They suggest a greater freedom of movement indicating a stylistic advance on the figurines of the preceding peasant cultures of Baluchistan, though the religious association of both are the same.

A seal, unearthed at Harappa, shows, on the obverse, a nude female figure, head downwards and legs stretched out upwards, with a plant issuing out of her womb.[3] This may be regarded as the prototype of the Earth Mother Śākambharī of the Purāṇas from whose body grow the life-sustaining vegetables. On the reverse, we find a female figure with dishevelled hair and arms raised in alarm, and a male figure standing in front of her in a threatening attitude with a shield-like object in one hand, and a sickle-like object in the other. Marshall suggests that the seal is intended to portray a human sacrifice connected with the Earth Goddess depicted on the other side. The association of the Earth Goddess with the vegetative forces of nature is not confined to the Śākambharī-seal alone. There are many others in which trees and plants are associated with the Goddess. In one such seal the goddess stands between the bifurcated branches of a *pipal* tree in front of which appears a half-kneeling worshipper behind whom stands a goat with a human face, and in the lower section there are seven persons dressed in short kilt and wearing long pigtails.[4]

Many of the living features of later Hindu religion and philosophy can be traced directly to this pre-Vedic source, and

[1] *cf.* Brunton and Caton-Thompson, *BC*, 29.
[2] Vats, *EH*, 292.
[3] Marshall, *MIC*, I, 52.
[4] *Ibid*, 63ff; Mackay, *FEM*, I, 337-38.

in this connexion we may refer to the principles of Tantricism, the philosophical Sāṅkhya, the practice of Yoga and the present day Śāktism. They come in to view not in the *Ṛgveda*, which represents more or less a pure Indo-Aryan tradition, but either in the later Vedas or in the still later Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads, Epics and Purāṇas, when the Vedic people had long since amalgamated with other races and absorbed some measure of their culture. Evolving out of a matriarchal tradition, the aforesaid features of Hindu life stand in reciprocal relation, the one being intimately associated with the other. The urban civilization although cut away the economic foundation of mother-right, its deep-rooted influence especially upon religon and ritual could not be annihilated.

The Mother Goddess figurines, scenes on seals and ritual objects, notabiy large stone *liṅgas* and *yonis* give glimpses of Tantric survivals, of magic fertility rites that formed the basis of primitive Tantricism, and of personal deities arising out of them. In popular Hinduism *liṅga* and *yoni* (male and female organs) stand for Śiva and Devī, and the prototype of the former is found in seals unearthed at Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Provided with horns on the head, and in one instance surrounded by animals, the three-faced male-god, who is seated in the posture of a *yogin* on several seals, may rightly be regarded as the prototype of the Indian god Śiva, the consort of the Mother Goddess.

The existence of a male principle, as is thus found in the Harappan religion, is not inconsistent with a matriarchally determined religious system. In the later Śākta theology, we find that the male principle has some part to play, although he is described as the connotative of static existence and, dissociated with Śakti or female principle, he is no better than a corpse. Also in the Sāṅkhya, *prakṛti* is all in all, *puruṣa* or the male principle being nothing but a passive spectator. The Vedic metaphysical speculations ultimately culminated in the monistic conception of the immaterial *brahman* at the ultimate reality. The dualistic Sāṅkhya conception of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* especially the conception of material *prakṛti* as the cause of the universe, has nothing to do with the Vedic conception of an immaterial *brahman* which was developed in the

Upaniṣads and further elaborated in the Vedantic speculations.

Referring to the anomalous position of the male principle in the Sāṅkhya, Śaṅkara asked, *Kathañcodāsinaḥ puruṣarpradhānaṃ pravartayet?* If creation is made possible by the union of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, how is it that the role of *puruṣa* is so insignificant? Or, if the *puruṣa* is so insignificant and indifferent, how is it that he takes so important a part in the affair of creation. This contradiction cannot be explained except by postulating a matriarchal origin for the system. In a matriarchal society the father has no kinship with his children who belong to their mother's clan. The early philosophers must have thought, in accordance with their social system, that just as a child is born as a result of union of the male and the female, so also the universe is a result of union of the *puruṣa* and the *prakṛti*. Just as a child in a matriarchal society has no real kinship with the father, so also the universe, in spite of being real, has no real relationship with the *puruṣa*. In a matriarchal system, the father has something to do in the matter of procreation, but in his family he is insignificant and a passive spectator, exactly like the *puruṣa* of the Sāṅkhya.[1]

The root of the Sāṅkhya philosophy must therefore be sought in the pre-Vedic matriarchal tradition in India in which the conception of a material *prakṛti* evolved from that of a material Earth Mother supposed to represent the forces that stimulate the generative powers of nature. Magical fertility rites, originally performed by women to ensure the process of nature, were invariably associated with such a conception of a material Earth Mother. These rites, surviving through the ages in popular beliefs and customs, were conserved and crystallized in the later Tantras, while the more rational speculations centering round the conception of a material Earth Mother (*prakṛti*) developed subsequently into a distinct mataphysical form, the Sāṅkhya system.

What was the exact influence of this matriarchal tradition upon the material culture and social institutions of the Harappans is impossible to determine at the present state of our knowledge. The Harappa civilization developed in a particular

[1] Bhattacharyya, *IMG*, 92-94.

corner of the vast Indian sub-continent. The rest of the land was thinly occupied by peoples belonging to different cultural levels. It is not possible at the present moment to make a definite pronouncement about the mental and spiritual environment of the various types of Indian peoples in their primitive stage. Study of the racial characteristics leads us nowhere, since it cannot be established that a particular racial type has an ineradicable racial character. Rather we have seen that it is the economic element, the mode of production, that creates the mode of life of a given society as a whole. The most prominent traits of a particular mode of life like religion, social usage and values, customs, etc. often find expression in the language of that body of men.

The main racial types with their various ramifications that have gone to make the people of India are included within one or the other of the four distinct speech-families : *viz.*, the Austric, the Sino-Tibetan, the Dravidian and the Indo-European (Aryan). The Austro-Asiatic dialects belonging to the Austric family of languages survive in the Kol or Munda, the Nicobarese and the Mon-Khmer speeches of India, but once their speakers were spread over the greater part of Northern India. The Austric speakers were mainly food-growers, but some of their groups became accustomed with elementary forms of agriculture. They used a common word (*lakuṭa*, *laguḍa*, *liṅga*), later adopted in the Indo-Aryan vocabulary, for denoting their digging stick and also their cult object, the *liṅga* or phallus.[1] They also worshipped a Mother Goddess called Mātṛkā (Polynesian *matariki*), sometimes identified with the Pleiades, and the word had been, in subsequent religious history of India, the common term for the Divine Mothers. The moon was also regarded as a goddess, and she is still worshipped by the surviving Austric speakers under the name Ninda Cando whose lover is the sun-god Siñ Boṅga. Rākā and Kuhū, old Austric names for full moon and new moon, survive as goddesses in the Vedic literature.[2] Very probably the Austric speakers, with their dark skin and snub nose, were known to the Vedic peoples as *Niṣādas*, and they gradually became Aryan speaking roughly

[1] *cf.* Bagchi, *PPI*, 10,14.
[2] Chatterji in *VA*, 151.

between *c.* 1500 and 600 BC. Racially the majority of the Austric speakers belonged to the Proto-Australoid group.

The Sino-Tibetan speakers, probably the *Kirātas* of Indian literature could touch only the fringe of India in the north and the north-east. These peoples of the Mongoloid stock inhabited the Himalayan region by the middle of the first millennium BC. Economically they were in the food-gathering stage and little is known about their original cults and rituals. Matriarchal survivals among the Himalayan tribes[1] and also the countless Mother Goddess shrines in the lower Himalayan region, stretching from west to east, however, give us some idea about their female-oriented religion, and it is likely that these peoples contributed something to the esoteric side of the Tantric rituals which is indicated by the story of Vasiṣṭha's initiation into the secrets of the Tārā cult.[2]

The Dravidian speakers now form a solid bloc in the Deccan and South India, and there is reason to believe that in other parts of India Dravidian was at one time fairly widespread. In Baluchistan we have still the Dravidian Brahui speech which is just a surviving fragment of very widespread Dravidian tract extending from Baluchistan and Sind through Rajasthan and Malwa into Maharashtra, Mysore, Andhra, Tamil-nadu and Kerala. Like the Indo-Europeans the Dravidians also belonged to a variety of races. The Dravidian problem is also basically similar to that of the Aryan. It is believed by a section of scholars that the original homeland of the Dravidian speakers was situated in the islands of the Aegean and the tracts of mainland along the Aegean Sea. Later they came to the Eastern Mediterranean tracts and from this region migrated in different directions. This, however, has not been proved archaeologically. The assumption that the Mohenjodaro and Harappa people spoke a primitive Dravidian speech accords with the subsequent trend of Indian history and civilization, but there is no definite evidence to support the Dravidian authorship of the Indus civilization.

From the evidence of the words in use among the early Tamils, we can derive the following of the material culture and

[1] Bhattacharyya, *IMG*, 81-89.
[2] *Infra.*

social institutions of the pre-Vedic Dravidians. They were agricultural peoples (*ér*, plough, *velānmāi*, agriculture) living in villages (*paḷḷī*) and towns (*ūr*, *peṭṭai*) which formed parts of districts (*naṭu*) of a country ruled by kings (*ko*, *ventaṇ*, *mannaṇ*) who lived in palaces (*koṭṭai*, *araṇ*) and maintained the laws and customs (*kaṭṭalai*, *pazakkam*). The soldeirs were armed with bows (*vil*), arrows (*ampu*), spears (*vel*) and swords (*vāḷ*) which testify the use of metals. Canoes, boats and even ships (*toṇī*, *oṭam*, *vallam*, *kappal*, *patavu*) were known to them. They also knew the art of writing on palmyra leaves (*olai*) and bundles of such leaves were known as books (*eṭu*). The title *ko* denoting the king was also attributed to the god to whose honour they used to dedicate temples (*koil*, *koyil*, *kovil*). Spinning (*nūl*), weaving (*ney*) and dyeing (*niram*), and also all the necessary arts of life, were known to them.[1]

There was once a time when it was believed that the Dravidian and other pre-Vedic contributions to the subsequent Hindu religion were negligible and barbaric, comprising only the worse features. But now the idea is completely changed and is admitted that the Dravidians contributed a great many elements of paramount importance to the evolution of Indian civilization and that in certain matters the Dravidian and other pre-Vedic contributions were deeper and more extensive than that of the Vedic peoples. Temple worship along with the conception of the *divine* in a more concrete form, the religious and philosophical ideas centering round the conception of the divinity as Śiva and Devī, worship of *liṅga* and *yoni*, pilgrimage to holy places, the practice of *yoga*, the ideas of *karma* and transmigration, the ritual of *pūjā* as opposed to the Vedic ritual of homa, fertility cult and image worship, etc. are evidently pre-Vedic contributions.[2]

But more important in this connexion is the worship of the Female Principle. Here we are reproducing the observations of Prof. S.K. Chatterji who has evaluated the entire range of Dravidian contributions from a linguistic point of view. About half a century ago, he pointed out that the name Umā, evidently of non-Sanskritic origin, recalls Mā, the Great Mother of the

[1] Caldwell, *CGDL*, 113.
[2] Raja in *HPEW*, I, 39; Chatterji, *IAH*, 31ff.

Asianic and East Mediterranean peoples, and that Durgā corresponds with Trqqas, a deity mentioned in the Lycian inscriptions of Asia Minor. From this he came to the conclusion that Śiva or Umā were in all likelihood fundamentally of Dravidian origin, and as such, they were the Indian modification of the great Mother Goddess and her consort of the Mediterranean peoples.[1] Further researches exhibit that the ancient cults which inspired those of Mā or Kubélé (Cybele) and Attis, or Hepit and Teshup, the former having as her vehicle the lion, and latter bull, formed undoubtedly one of the bases on which the Śiva-Umā cult of Hindu Indian grew up.[2] According to Chatterji, "the patriarchal social organisation of the Aryans presented a contrast to the matriarchal one of the Dravidians. The great Mother Goddess of a matriarchal society, who was brought into India by the Dravidians from Asia Minor and the Eastern Mediterranean Islands, was also conceived as an all-powerful force which was identical with Nature itself. In front of this puissant and eternally active *Śakti* or power that was the Great Mother of the universe, her male counterpart was virtually an ineffective being. This idea also developed in India; and in the Tantras one of the basic concepts is that of the Śakti, or the wife of the Female Counterpart of a God. The god was a mere male, and all his power lay in his female form who was looked upon as his wife, repository or mainspring of his *Śakti* or power."[3]

The precise nature of the social institutions of the pre-Vedic Indians is a question which the internal evidence is in itself too fragmentary to solve. The internal evidence must therefore be studied in the light of what is known of the surviving institutions and ideas, races and languages, beliefs and rituals, because the past is always contained in the present. Scholars have worked and are still working on these diverse fields, and we have referred to some of their views on different occasions including those of the present author but there is one difficulty. The conclusions drawn from some fragmentary surviving evidence are liable to the fallacy of over-speculation, in some

[1] *MR*, (1924), 679.
[2] Raychaudhuri, *SIA*, 200-04.
[3] *JAS*, I (1959), 107-8.

respects the formulations themselves even going far beyond its normal suggestivity. However, this much can be said with some amount of certainty that the predominance of female figurines over male in the earliest levels of cultures in which they occur in the Ancient Near East from the Eastern Mediterranean to the Indus Valley shows that attention was first concentrated on the feminine aspects of the process of generation, leading to a female dominated world view. This female-dominated world view was nourished, in the subsequent history of the Indian people, not by the upper strata of society, the rich and the powerful, but by simpler peoples, mostly agricultural, belonging to the lower order of society.[1] On many occasions, under different historical conditions, this popular undercurrent gained momentum and later culminated into what is known as the Śākta religion.

[1] Bhattacharyya, *IMG*, 91-92.

2

THE VEDIC AGE AND THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

How much of the Harappa culture survived the final destruction of the cities is a perplexing question. It appears that a great deal that was connected with craftsmanship and trade did survive and also the cults and certain myths and legends. One should not fail to recall in this connexion that the language and cults changed in Mesopotamia with successive invaders, but the cities remained—at most the centre of gravity shifted from one city to another. The same was true of Egypt where dynasty after dynasty ruled without any profound change in the basic fabric and pattern of life, in spite of repeated invasions from outside. But the Indus cities had a different fate. They were completely ruined. This complete ruin could have been due to just one cause, the annihilation of their mode of production, the wiping out of their system of agriculture. Those who did it were not therefore agriculturists. They shattered the dams by which flood irrigation was made to deposit silt on a wider expanse of land. This marked the end of agricultural production, and so of the Harappan cities which had already began to decay from long stagnation.

This has nicely been revealed in the *Ṛgveda*, the oldest literary document of the Vedic Aryans. It is interesting to note that the Vedic peoples, who were in all likelihood responsible for the destruction of the Harappa civilization in or about the seventeenth century BC[1] and whose material culture is reflected

[1] Wheeler, *IC*, 132. In 1926, R.P. Chanda pointed out that the Aryan invasions, strikingly similar to those occuring in the Aegean and in western

in the *Ṛgveda*, were not basically agriculturists. They lived predominantly by pastoralism, reckoning wealth in cows and horses. In fact, out of 10,462 verses of the *Ṛgveda*, only 25 refer to agriculture,[1] and significantly enough, 22 of the said 25 verses belong to the later portions of the *Ṛgveda*.[2] Side by side, the importance attached to the possession of cattle is shown by numerous passages. The word *go* denoting the cow is used as one of the synonyms of *Pṛthivī* the earth. According to the *Nighaṇṭu*,[3] nine other terms were also used to denote the cow. Even in the *Ṛgveda*, the gods are invoked as offspring of the cows[4] and the poets did not hesitate to compare their songs with the lowing of the cows[5] or to designate the starry heaven

Asia, took place in the Indus valley in the second millennium BC. Between 1928 and 1934, Vats excavated at Harappa a cemetery, known as the cemetery H (*EH*, 203ff). In 1934, on the basis of its post-Harappan character, Childe came to the conclusion that the peoples of the Cemetery H might have been Aryans (*NLMAE*, 228). In 1936, on an analogy between the urn-burials described in the Vedic *Gṛhyasūtras* and the pot-burials of Cemetery H, Datta identified them with the Aryans (*MI*, 1936, 223-307). Vats also came to a similar conclusion in 1940 (*EH*, 207-10). In 1947, not only was Childe's suggestion of the Cemetry H people being Aryans accepted by Wheeler, but also they were held responsible for the destruction of the Harappa civilization To substantiate the invasion theory by literary evidence Wheeler depended especially on Chanda's researches and suggested that the fortification wall of the Harappan mound AB represented the pre-Vedic stronghold of India. In addition he took into account the evidence of the scattered skeletons of men, women and children found in the upper level of Mohenjodaro which, he thought, implied a Massacre, a likely enough phenomenon in case of a hostile Aryan attack (*AI*, III, 58-130). In 1950, the theory of Wheeler was broadly accepted by Piggott (*PI*, 261-63). The possibility of the Cemetery H people being Aryans and destroyers of the Harappan civilization has recently been doubted, (Lal in *AI*, IX, 88). For recent theories about the end of the Indus civilization see Chakrabarti in *ISPP*, IX, 343ff, and also my introduction to the new edition of Chanda's *IAR*.

[1] I. 23.15; 117.21; II. 14.11; IV. 57.1-8; V. 53.13; VI. 6.4; VIII. 20.19; 22.6; 78.10: X. 34.13; 48.7: 83.37: 94.13: 101.3-4; 117 7; 146.6.

[2] In the older portions of the *RV*, we have three words of agricultural significance: *ūrdara* (II.14.11), *Dhānya* (V. 53.13) and *Vapanti* (VI. 6.4). The verses of the fourth maṇḍala (VI. 57.1-8) are proved to be later interpolation. See Hopkins in *JAOS*, XVII, 85n.

[3] II. 11.

[4] VI 50 11.

[5] VII. 32.22; 106.1; IX. 22.2, etc.

after the term *gāvaḥ*.[1] "Again and again in the songs and invocations to the gods the prayer for cattle and horses occurs. Also the strife amongst hostile aboriginal inhabitants turns on the possession of cattle. Therefore, too, the old word for 'war' or 'battle' is originally desire for cattle (*gaviṣṭi*). In the most extravagant expressions, cows and bullocks are praised as the most precious possessions."[2]

There are also some interesting passages in the *Ṛgveda* which show that the pastoral Ṛgvedic peoples destroyed some cities and also some dams and barrages indispensable for agriculture. and by doing so they knocked down the basic foundation of the economy of a civilized people. Indra is looked upon as the liberator of waters. Accompanied by the Maruts he attacked and smashed Vṛtra who encompassed the waters. A barrage or dam naturally encompasses water, and in view of this it may be suggested that Vṛtra originally symbolized the reservoirs of a developed agricultural civilization. According to the Ṛgvedic descriptions, Indra pierced the mountains and released the pent-up waters, like imprisoned cows. The nineteenth century scholars looked upon Vṛtra as a demon of drought, confining waters within the clouds. But this explanation seems to be unsatisfactory since thunderstorms and rains are hardly mentioned in the Indra-Vṛtra myth and clouds play quite a minor part in it. As the waters released by Indra are described as running like a horse in a race, rain-water cannot be meant; it does not flow horizontally. But if a dam or barrage is smashed, the liberated waters could evoke horses in a race.[3]

The accumulation of wealth came in primitive societies in two ways: by the development of agriculture and by the domestication of cattles. Where agriculture developed considerably without any intervening pastoral stage, mother-right elements became the driving forces of society. "This has been the case in North America where no domestication of animals has taken place and, most conspicuously, among those tribes, such as the Iroquois and Pueblos, in which agriculture attained in the hands of women an important development. Similarly the

[1] I. 154.6; VII. 36.1.
[2] Winternitz, *HIL*, I, 64-65.
[3] Bhattacharyya, *IMG*, 101-3.

matriarchal order is found persisting among the peoples of Indonesia and Micronesia, where the culture of rice and paddy supply the staple means of subsistence and pastoral conditions have not existed. The matriarchal character of society has been preserved among many African tribes who have remained chiefly agricultural. This happened notably in Egypt, which owed its wealth and culture to the Nile and to the fields which it fertilised, and where pastoral property never attained any degree of importance."[1] The same also probably held good in the case of the pre-Vedic village communities of India.

Elsewhere the stage of highly developed agriculture was reached only after passing through a purely pastoral phase of long duration, as with the Ṛgvedic peoples of India. Where agriculture developed in its most productive form in the societies which were originally pastoral, we have the opposite result. Instead of raising the economic power and importance of the earth-cultivating women, it gave rise to the most pronounced type of patriarchal societies. The religion of the *Ṛgveda* is therefore patriarchal, a reflection of the society of the pastoral warriors. The pastoral tribes require greater courage and hardihood than the agricultural, and also an efficient leadership to protect the cattle. So the cult of the heroes and ancestors attains its highest degree of development among the pastorals. The herder in his nomadic life has to live under the scorching heat of the sun, the dreadful thunders, the devastating storms. So his religion is mainly connected with the sky, in which astral and nature myths, often personified in secondary gods and godlings, make their appearance. The Supreme Being of the pastoral religion is generally identified with the sky-god who rules over other deities like the headman of a patriarchal joint family.

Very naturally, goddesses occupy a subordinate-position in Vedic religion. As wives of the great gods they play a still more insignificant part. They are mere shadowy reflections of the gods, but with little independent power. Even the so-called important goddesses like Aditi and Uṣas have no significance in the subsequent religious history of India. In the *Ṛgveda*, Aditi is styled 'mother of the gods', and indeed she was mother of

[1] Briffault, *M*, II, 251-52.

the great Ādityas like Indra, Varuṇa Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Dakṣa, etc.[1] Very probably she was the ancient tribal mother when the Vedic peoples were still in the hunting stage of economy. But as one may naturally expect, being a female member of a patriarchal family of the Vedic gods, her position cannot be very important in the pantheon. In the Ṛgvedic age when the pastoral economy became the driving force of society, we find her treated with diminishing importance. Therefore it is not at all surprising that this goddess is described as flattering Indra.[2] No separate hymn is dedicated to her, and even there are passages attempting to deprive her of her former position. Thus in *Ṛgveda* X: 72.4, it is stated that the earth sprang from Uttānapad, from the earth sprang the regions :· Dakṣa sprang from Aditi and Aditi from Dakṣa. According to Yāska,[3] Aditi and Dakṣa might have originated from the same source, or derived their substance from each other. In the *Ṛgveda*,[4] Dakṣa is described as one of the Ādityas and consequently as the son of Aditi. But in the Brāhmaṇa literature Dakṣa is identified with Prajāpati, the creator. It seems therefore that the Vedic Aryans who developed a cattle-raising economy and a patriarchal form of social organisation were not willing to give a minimum recognition to this old mother of gods. In her place, they were gradually developing the idea of a male creator which was later crystallized in the form of Dakṣa-Prajāpati. Such a process of ideological transition is met with in Semitic religion in which, in conformity with the transition from mother-right to father-right, the progress of things was changing goddesses into gods, or placing them beneath the male deities.[5] Aditi did not, however, change her sex, but she was reduced to a minor goddess.

Of the Ṛgvedic goddesses, the one of any importance is Uṣas. She is invoked in 20 separate hymns[6] and her name is

[1] I. 50.2; II. 17.1; 27.1; III. 4.11; VII. 47.9; 85.4; VIII. 18.3; 56.11; X. 36.3; 72.8-9; 132.6.

[2] *RV*, V. 31.5; VIII. 12.14.

[3] *Nirukta*, XI. 23.

[4] II. 27.1.

[5] Robertson-Smith, *RS*, 52.

[6] *RV*, I. 48-49, 113, 123-24; III. 61; IV. 51-52; V. 79-80: VI. 64-65; VII. 75-81; VIII. 172.

mentioned more than 300 times. Despite numerous references to Uṣas, it is interesting to note that, unlike nearly all the gods, she receives no share in the Soma offering. She is conceived as a beautiful dancing girl that pleases the eye and as such she was popular among the Vedic peoples from the point of her youthfulness. But their real attitude towards this goddess was certainly not of reverence. In *Ṛgveda* IV. 30.8.11, the poet does not hesitate to admire the heroism of Indra in overcoming Uṣas: "This Indra, was a deed of might and manliness which thou didst achieve that thou didst smite the daughter of the sky (Uṣas), a woman who was bent on evil. Thou Indra, the great (god) didst crush Uṣas, though the daughter of the sky, who was exalting herself. Uṣas fled away in terror from her shattered car, when the vigorous (Indra) had crushed it. This chariot of her lies broken and dissolved while she herself has fled afar off."[1] Since the story of the rape of Uṣas by Indra is repeated in many passages of the *Ṛgveda*,[2] we cannot call it simply an isolated event without any significance.[3]

The Earth Mother, Pṛthivī, generally celebrated conjointly with Dyaus, is lauded alone in only a short hymn in the *Ṛgveda*.[4] Here, although she is addressed as the mother and substance of all things and invoked in company of the sky to grant blessings, her conception admits of a totally different explanation. The Waters, Āpaḥ, are lauded in four hymns[5] as well as in a few scattered passages, but their personification is only incipient, hardly extending beyond the notion of their being mothers, wives and goddesses who bestow boons and come to sacrifice. In the *Ṛgveda* the rivers are connected with the goddess cult. The *Sarasvatī* is more greatly celebrated than any other river, but as a deity she only ranks the lowest class. Of other female deities, Diti[6] and Rātri[7] are merely antitheses of Aditi and Uṣas respectively. Vāk or personified speech is celebrated in one hymn which later came to be known as the

[1] Muir's tr.
[2] II. 15.6; X. 73.6; X. 138.5.
[3] See Kosambi in *JBBRAS*, XXVII. 19ff.
[4] V. 84.
[5] VII. 47; VII. 49; X. 9; X. 30.
[6] IV. 2.11; V. 62.8; Vii. 15.12
[7] X. 127.

Devısūkta.[1] Goddesses as wives of the great gods are mentioned by their names only which are simply formed from those of the gods with the feminine suffix *ānī*.

The insignificant position of the goddesses was evidently due to the patriarchal outlook resulting from a purely pastoral economy. The general character of the *Ṛgveda* reflects a class society. The growth of private ownership in pastoral societies was more rapid than that in the agricultural. Wealth in form of cattle was durable and easy to steal or exchange. It could be increased by raids and wars. Thus among the higher pastoral tribes developed a kingship which was not magical, but military. For successful leadership, the king and his followers received the lions share of the spoils and the wealth thus amassed promoted social inequalities. Warfare is frequently mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*. The Vedic warriors found it hard to vanquish the existing non-Vedic tribes whom they used to call Daitya, Dānava, Asura, Piśāca, Rākṣasa, Barbara, etc.

But even in the *Ṛgveda* we come across passages, which refer to a pre-class undifferentiated society. Originally there was a type of communism among the Ṛgvedic deities, said Max Müller, and he coined a term *henotheism* to denote that state,[2] but subsequently with the growth of class division among human beings, its reflection was seen even in the Vedic pantheon. There are so many passages in the *Ṛgveda* which refer to wealth and cattle as common property and to their equal distribution. In the concluding verses of the *Ṛgveda* unity of mind and determination is desired with a significant statement, *deva bhāgaḥ yathāpūrve saṁjānānā upāsate*,[3] implying that there was once a time when the gods used to sit together and take their respective shares collectively and consciously, which in all probability refers to a lost age when men used to do the same. Even the term *rājan* was originally used in a different sense, not in the sense of a king, because kingship itself was a product of class society. The *rājan* was the first among the equals of the tribe,

[1] X. 125.
[2] *RV*, I. 25.6; III. 1; IV. 59.2; V. 84.4; VII; 72.2; etc.
[3] I. 24.3; 27.6; 102.4; 141.1; II. 14.12; III. 2.12; VI. 66.1; VII. 52.21; X 76.45; etc.

yo vaḥ senānīramahato gaṇasya rājā vrātsya prathama vabhuvaḥ.[1] The terms *gaṇa* and *vrāta*, according to Sāyana, denote the same thing, i.e. tribe. In earlier grammatical works, the term *gaṇa* and *saṁgha* are used in the sense of tribe.[2] Pāṇini says that *saṁgha* and *gaṇa* are synonymous.[3] In ancient lexicons *gaṇa* and *samūha* are used to denote tribes.[4] In the *Ṛgveda*, there are references to occasional tribal gatherings in the *sabhā* and the *samiti*, the political organisations of society. Thus, here and there in the same text are found relics of an undifferentiated society through which the Vedic tribes passed their hunting and early pastoral stages.

The deities of the *Ṛgveda* were mostly personification of natural phenomena under which the herders had to live. Even this was a new religion gradually adopted by the hunting tribes coming into pastoral stage. But could they give up the religious practices of their pre-pastoral life? In fact, they could not. They propitiated the deities of pastoral religion with pre-pastoral rituals, of which animal sacrifice was obviously the most important. Two of the Ṛgvedic hymns,[5] later used to be recited in the Aśvamedha sacrifice, show the real nature of the early Vedic rituals. The animal, to be killed, was identified with some deities. It was anointed and then cut to pieces. Its flesh was then cooked and a lump was offered to fire. Then it was eaten up by the participants of the sacrifice in the midst of such utterings as *āghu, wājyā, vassṭkāro*.

The original purpose of Vedic sacrifices, in theory and also in practice, does not differ from that of magic, as has been shown by eminent Vedic scholars.[6] The hunting rituals of the primitive Vedic tribes, through which they endeavoured to control nature, underwent qualitative change in later days owing to the change in their mode of production. The Vedic peoples, after their arrival in India, came in contact with the existing non-Vedic

[1] *RV*, X, 34.12.

[2] Patañjali on *Pāṇ*, V. 1.19.

[3] III. 3.86.

[4] *JRAS* (1915), 138; *IA* (1915), 161.

[5] I. 162-63.

[6] Keith, *RPV*, 258-59; Winternitz, *HIL*, I, 184; Macdonell in *ERE*, VIII, 312.

peoples, and as is very natural to expect, they were influenced by their cults and rituals. As a result of this influence a number of non-Vedic goddesses—*e.g.* Ilā, Mahī, Puraṃdhi, Pārendi, Dhīṣaṇā, Rākā, Kuhū, Sinīvālī, Pṛṣṇi, Saraṇyu, Lakṣmī, Alakṣmī, Oṣadhi, Āpyā, Yoṣā, Gandharvī, Asunīti, Niṣṭigṛ, etc.,[1] found their room even in the Ṛgvedic pantheon. We have already seen that Kuhū and Rākā came into the Vedic religion from the Austric speakers.

This attraction towards new goddesses had evidently something to do with the adoption of agriculture. The purely pastoral economy of the Vedic Aryans eventually declined, but the patriarchal social organisation and patrilinear inheritance were retained by the heirs of the Ṛgvedic peoples. These traits are historical realities which can be identified, traced and documented, and as an undifferentiated cultural complex originally stood in opposition to a female dominated outlook inherited from the pre-Vedic atmosphere with which it was in constant conflict and out of which emerged a synthesis, the pre-Vedic elements gradually working their way into the practices of the dominant society. Some of these elements were successfully absorbed while others were never *legitimized* by the sacred texts in spite of their wide prevalence.

Goddesses of the post-Ṛgvedic literature like Ambikā, Umā, Durgā, Kālī etc. were non-Vedic deities later adopted by the Vedic Aryans. The different names of the Mother Goddess appear to have originally indicated different tribal deities who were afterwards identified with the wife of Śiva Paśupati, the pre-Aryans god known to have been worshipped by the Mohenjodaro peoples. Ambikā is called Rudra's sister in the *Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā*,[2] while the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*[3] describes her as his spouse. The latter work also refers to such goddesses as Vairocanī, Durgī, Kātyāyaṇī and Kanyākumāri.[4] Umā, the daughter of Himavat, is mentioned in the *Kena Upaniṣad.* The name, as we have seen above, is of non-Sanskrit origin which was originally associated with Mā (*cf.* the goddess Mā of Cappadocia) or Amma denoting 'mother'. Amma or

[1] For references see my *IMG*, 103-04.
[2] III. 57; *cf. Taitt. Br.*, I.6.10.4-5.
[3] X. 18.
[4] X. 1.7.

Umma was also an epithet of the Chaldean Mother Goddess who was identified with Ishtar. "The Babylonian word for Mother is Umma or Umā, the Accadian Ummi, and the Dravidian is Amma. These words can be connected with each other and with Umā, the Mother Goddess."[1] It is perhaps due to her Upaniṣadic epithet Haimavatī that in later works she has been identified with Pārvatī or Durgā. The names of these goddesses emphasise their relation with inaccessible mountain regions inhabited by non-Vedic tribes. Kālī, Karālī, Bhadrakāli,[2] etc. were originally fearful goddesses of the dark-skinned peoples.

So it appears that in the post-Ṛgvedic age there was a revival of the Pre-Vedic Mother Goddess cult. The Ṛgvedic goddesses like Uṣas, Aditi etc. of hoary tribal antiquity failed to attract attention of the Vedic peoples who were then adopting new methods of production. Uṣas went completely out of sight. Aditi was still invoked as the mother of the Ādityas,[4] but she had already becoming a declining figure, being made the wife of Viṣṇu in the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā*,[5] and still later the wife of the sage Kaśyapa in the Purāṇas. Pṛthivī or Earth Goddess was invoked in a hymn of the *Atharvaveda*[6] and her marriage with the sky was described in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*,[7] but later she was identified with the wife of Viṣṇu. Many of her attributes were absorbed by Sītā[8] who, as a deity presiding over agriculture, was mentioned once in the *Ṛgveda*.[9] There is nothing to show that Sarasvatī was ever anything more in the *Ṛgveda* than a river goddess, but we find her identified in the Brāhmaṇa literature[10] with Vāk or speech, mentioned elsewhere in the *Ṛgveda*, and in the post-Vedic mythology she had become goddess

1 Dikshit, *MG*, 59.
2 *Muṇḍaka Up.*, I, 2.4.
3 *Sān G.S.*, II.15.14; here Śrī is also mentioned.
4 *AV*, VII.2.15; VIII.9.21; IX.1.4; XIII.2.9; *Taitt. Br*, I.1 9.1; *Śat. Br*, III.1 3.3; VI.1.2.8; XI.6.3.8; etc.
5 XXIX, 60; *cf. Taitt. Sam.*, VII.5.14.
6 XII.1.
7 IV.27.
8 *AV*, VII.17.4; *YV*, XII.69.72; *Gobhila G.S.*, IV.4.27-30; *Pāraskara G.S*, II.17.9-10.
9 IV. 57.
10 *Śatapatha*, III.9.1.7.; *Aitareya*, III.1.10.

of eloquence and wisdom, invoked as a muse and regarded as the wife of Brahmā.

The revival of the pre-Vedic Mother Goddess cult in the post-Ṛgvedic age was evidently due to the initiation of the Vedic Aryans into the agricultural way of life, as we have stressed above. With this they adopted numerous rituals, designed to secure the fertility of the fields, which must have played a very significant part among the neighbouring agricultural societies. Many rituals of the other *i.e.*, non-Vedic, tradition, mainly sexual in character, which found their way into certain ancient texts, became the visible portion of the Tantric iceberg, the significance of which was, however, denied or distorted by subsequent generations. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*[1] we come across numerous passages in which sexual union is identified with sacrifice. The conception of productive pairs[2] and 'fruitful semen'[3] occur in many passages. In the white *Yajurveda*,[4] we come across a hymn which clearly shows that sexual union was employed to promote agricultural production. The legend describes an agricultural rite in which the queen (vāvātā) and the priest (udgātā) had to make sexual intercourse in the presence of a number of persons. In all the verses sexual union is brought in relation to agricultural operations.[5] Originally this ritual was a part of the Aśvamedha sacrifice in which the priest had to die after his ceremonial intercourse with the queen. Later on, beasts like the horse, were supplied as substitutes for men in such rituals, and the sexual scene used to be mimed.[6] In the Vāmadevya Sāman of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*[7] (the term reminds as of Vāmācāra) we come across the following: "One summons; that is a *hiṃkāra*. He makes request; that is a *prastāva*. Together with the woman he lies down; that is an *udgītha*. He lies upon the woman; that is a *pratihāra*. He

[1] I.9.2.7; 11; VI.3.1.28; VI.4.3.7; VI.6.2.8; etc. See *SBE*, XII, XLI.

[2] II.4.4.21; II.5.1.11; V.1.3.19; V.2.5.8; VI.3.1.30; VI.3.3.38; VII.5.1.6; etc.

[3] I.7.2.14; I.9.2.7; II.3.1.32; VI.3.3.18; VII.4.2.24; etc.

[4] *Vāj. Saṃ.*, XXIII. 22-31.

[5] Chattopadhyaya, *L*, 318-19.

[6] For details see my *IMG*, 39-41. 124-27.

[7] II.13.

comes to an end; that is a *nidhāna*. He comes to a finish; that is a *nidhāna*. This is the *Vāmadevya sāman*, as woven upon copulation, comes to copulation, reaches a full length of life, lives long, becomes great in offspring and cattle, great in fame. One should never abstain from any woman. That is his rule."[1] In many scattered passages of the Upaniṣads, the woman is conceived as the sacrificial fire, her lower portion as the sacrificial wood, the genitalia as the flames, the penetration as the carbon and the sexual union as the spark.[2] The *Bṛhadāraṅyaka Upaniṣad*[3] says that the lower portion (*upastha*) of a woman is to be conceived as the sacrificial altar (vedī), the pubic hairs (*lomāni*) as the sacrificial grass, the outerskin (*bahirścarman*) as the floor for pressing the Soma plants (*adhiṣavaṇa*), and the two labia of the vulva (*muṣkau*) as the inmost fire. He who remembers this during copulation gets the reward of the *Vājapeya* sacrifice. The same text goes on so far as to state that if a woman refuses sexual union, she must be forced to do so.[4] In later period, ingenious explanations were devised to explain away the vestiges of such practices. Even then, the evidences relating to sexual rituals and their connexion with agriculture and the cult of the Mother Goddess could not completely be hushed up, and it is interesting to note that, in almost every period, the Vedic literature shows traces of agricultural sexual rituals and of a pattern of sexual behaviour different from the officially accepted norm.

The pastoral economy of the Vedic peoples when supplemented by agriculture created a condition of rapid class division. The simple productive magics of the earlier age, which characterised the primitive Vedic *yajñas* and consisted of performances like the collective eating rituals enumerated above become class-oriented. With the change in the technique of production, although the pre-class tribal societies degenerated, magical practices did not die, but their purpose began to change. In the first stage the change was quantitative. To the old magical practices inherited from their hunting stage were added many new rituals, mainly sexual in character, derived from the existing

[1] Hume's tr.
[2] *Chāndogya*, V. 18.1-12; *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, VI.2.13.
[3] VI.4.3.
[4] VI.4.6-7.

agricultural tribes. In the next stage the change was qualitative, as in class societies primitive magic transforms itself into the esoteric art of the ruling or privileged class. Now we have Grand Sacrifices, sponsored by the rich and ruling class and conducted by a formidable array of priests, divided into four groups. And with the growth of organised priesthood and mechanical sacerdotalism, the sacrifice of cattle became a senseless source of the destruction of cattle wealth. Cattle had to be killed on numerous occasions, and in the Aśvamedha sacrifice as many as 600 bulls were killed.

The production of surplus prepared the ground for the rise of urban settlements. Trade was facilitated in which cattle served as the best means of exchange. The new condition did not encourage such senseless destruction of cattle wealth. In spite of a new religious set up, the old pre-pastoral rituals did not sink into oblivion, and the priestly class were not mentally ready to give up their traditional rituals. The Brahmanical religious practices did not suit the new condition. The Brahmanical attitude towards trade was not helpful. The Buddhist and Jain emphasis on non-injury to animals thus assumes a new economic significance in this context.

It is perhaps at this stage of development that cow became identified with the Mother Goddess and beef-eating became a taboo.[1] The *Suttanipāta*[2] states that cattle should be protected for they are the givers of food, beauty and happiness. This was certainly a teaching based upon the growing demands of the traders which was the crying need of the age. Even the Kṣatriya rulers desired to depend more upon the wealth of the traders than upon the magical powers of the Brāhmaṇa priests. The Brahmavidyā (knowledge of the *brahman*) of the Upaniṣads was sponsored not by the Brāhmaṇas but by the Kṣatriyas who held that Brahmanical sacrificial religion was useless. Buddhism gave moral support to all the demands of the trading class. Money-lending, usury and slave-keeping are not condemned in the Buddhist texts.[3]

The real economic cause of the disintegration of tribal society

[1] Bhattacharyya, *IMG*, 53-54.
[2] 296-97, 309.
[3] Sharma in *DKCV*, 63.

and the growth of states did not escape the notice of the Buddha. So long as the mode of production cannot yield surplus, the integration of tribal society remains intact, but when a revolutionary change in that mode takes place, it also changes the existing social values and relations, giving rise to the growth of a non-productive privileged class. In order to look after the interest of this privileged class, laws are enacted, police and military systems are introduced—in other words, the conception of state becomes materialised. This did not escape the notice of the Buddha as is proved by his discourse on the origin of the state.[1]

By the time of the Sūtras, the character of the *yajña* or sacrifice had changed completely. A whole new set of sacrifices had grown up, designed to be performed by the householder alone. The collective nature of the sacrifice was totally lost. It had degenerated into a private affair. The triumph of the householder and his property, inevitably carried along with it the stress on the value of celibacy. In early Buddhism and Jainism, it should be remembered, celibacy is also stressed. The emphasis on celibacy should demonstrate finally that sexual restrictions were inherent to the patriarchal tradition, and not to mysticism. The severe prohibitions on sexual relations outside of marriage were due to the overwhelming demand of private property, to make sure of the ancestry of the child. With property is associated the question of inheritance and herein lies the economic significance of the female chastity which is the contribution of the patriarchal class society.

Among the earlier peoples, as we have seen above the object of rituals was the increase of production, and in them sex had a major part to play in relation to the Mother Goddess cult. In tribal life, the ceremony of initiation was invariably an introduction to maturity and participation in the sex life.[2] The class society was designed to exclude all these pre-class elements from its structure. Thus in the Brahmanical system, the original purpose of initiation had been distorted beyond all recognition and turned into its opposite. The initiate was surrounded by elaborate prohibitions. He must observe celebacy and avoid

[1] *DN*, III, 27.
[2] See my *IPR*.

women. Even he was not entitled to touch the feet of his teacher's wife. This shows that it was not the act itself, not the spiritual wellbeing of the Brahmacārin, but the consequences of the act upon the class society that led to such severe prohibitions on sexual relations.

The values introduced by the new religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, etc. remained for a long time the driving forces of society, but eventually it was the female principle that triumphed. The agricultural peoples did indeed pay lip-service to the religions preached to them but they continued to worship their local goddesses. The readiness to receive converts from all sections of peoples contributed to the spread of the new religions which, in course of sime, rolled up new recruits by absorbing a seemingly endless number of local cults and deities, especially those connected with Tantricism and Mother Goddess. But by doing so, as is natural to expect, they deviated from the original principles for which they stood.

3

THE NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS: RESUSCITATION OF THE FEMALE PRINCIPLE (*c. 600 BC-300 AD*)

The Buddha was born in an age of transition when the *janapadas* (tribal settlement) were developing into *mahā-janapadas* (bigger confederacies), leading to the rise of organised states. Already four such *mahā-janapadas* became distinguished as powerful states, and the forces behind the subsequent Magadhan imperialism could be seen. The Buddha was born in a class society. The Śākyas could then reach the higher grades of production as is proved by numerous references to their agricultural wealth. Though they had a separate political entity, they were subordinate to the Kosala kingdom. Many times the Buddha proclaimed himself as a citizen of Kosala. It was indeed difficult for a prosperous, but class-divided, people like the Śākyas to maintain a dual political entity. So it is not at all surprising that the Kosalan prince Viḍudabha did not hesitate to annihilate them, though his father was a great devotee of the Buddha. It is against this background that the Buddha's sayings concerning human misery should be read. Overwhelmed by the stupendous social transformations and wholesale bloodshed of the times the Buddha said: "I behold the rich in this world, of the goods which they have acquired, in their folly they give nothing to others; they eagerly heap riches together and further and still further they go in their persuit of enjoyment. The king, although he may have conquered the kingdoms of the earth, although he may be ruler of all land this side the sea, up to the ocean's shore, would still insatiate, covet that which is beyond the sea.

The princes, who rule kingdoms, rich in treasures and wealth, turn their greed against one another pandering insatiably to their desires. If these acts thus restlessly swimming in the stream of impermanence, carried along by greed and carnal desire, who then can walk on earth in peace."[1]

This was the reason behind the establishment of the Buddhist *saṃghas* which were evidently modelled on the pattern of tribal democracies and meant to be the ideal substitutes for a vanished way of life. How thoroughly did the Buddha imitate the tribal model has been shown by Chattopadhyaya who, having dealt elaborately with the problems relating to (I) the procedure of entry into the *saṃgha*, (II) the internal administration of the *saṃgha*, and (III) the personal or private property within the *saṃgha*, came to the conclusion that "at a critical stage of Indian history, while the free tribes of the times were being ruthlessly exterminated and, within the orbits of the expanding state powers, people were experiencing the rise of new values on the ruins of tribal equality the Buddha was modelling his *saṃghas* on the basic principles of tribal society and was advising the brethren of his order to mould their lives according to these principles. This point is crucial. In building up his own *saṃghas*, the Buddha could provide the people of his times with the illusion of a lost reality, of the dying tribal collective. And it was only the great genius of the Buddha which could have built this coherent and complete illusion. Not only did he successfully built up his *saṃghas* on the model of the pre-class society, but he took great care to see that the members therein—the *bhikkhus* within the *saṃghas* lived a perfectly detached life i.e. detached from the great historic transformation going on in the society at large, *whose course was obviously beyond his power to change.*"[2]

But at the same time the Buddha had to face the dual requirements of his age, and this alone explains why a considerable number of the contemporary aristocrats formed his front rank associates. Elsewhere we have said that Buddhism had given moral support to the interests of the trading class. The Buddha accepted the new social requirements in which debtors

[1] Oldenberg, *B*, 64.
[2] *L*, 485, Italics added.

and slaves could not run away from their obligations, animals could no longer be killed indiscriminately and private property could not be appropriated. Ability to pay taxes was considered by the Buddha as one of the five fruits of wealth. In Brahmanical religion the trading class was assigned the third place in society, but the Buddha's attitude to the caste system raised their social status. Likewise, the Buddha's emphasis on the barrenness of the sacrificial religion saved them from unnecessary expenditure. At the same time, as we have seen above, he offered to the oppressed peoples of his times a suitable *illusion* of ancient tribal communism which was already trampled and undermined in *reality*. In fact, the Buddha had to act as an unconscious tool of history and it was not possible for him, though he understood the problem fully well, to change the course of historical transformation and re-establish the pre-class society once again. Class society, in spite of all its ugliness was a historical necessity, and what the Buddha could do under such a condition was to boost up some of its progressive features in public life and rescue some of the beneficial aspects of tribal life in a class society.

Other contemporaries of the Buddha were also overwhelmed by the stupendous social transformations of the age—the collapse of the tribal institutions, the rise of the new values ushered in by the state power and the new forces of injustice and untruth—and they tried to understand the problems in their own way. Gośāla, the leader of the Ājīvikas, became a fatalist who was forced to believe that human activity could do nothing to change the course of events. Everything appeared to him to have been determined by the forces of fate or destiny. The destruction of the Vajjians, one of the surviving free tribes, appeared to him as 'great storm cloud' that swept away all hopes for humanity. He died of despair and madness, pining in his delirium for the last drink (*carime pāne*), the last song (*carime geye*), the last dance (*carime natte*) and the last greetings (*carime añjalịkamme*)—characteristics of simple undifferentiated tribal life. Thus from his death-bed he could only advise to his follower to play on the lute—quite consistent for a man who saw the whole world he stood for falling to pieces

before his very eyes.[1]

Although Mahāvīra differed from Gosāla in many respects, the ruthless form of exploitation and misery of his age roused in him a negative feeling similar to that of Gośāla. He believed in action but the purpose of that action was to get rid of all actions. Every action, according to him, produces *karma*, and thus entails on the doer the continuance of worldly existence. To get rid of all *karma* being the highest goal, what is therefore required is to annihilate the existing *karma* and to prevent the formation of new *karma*, technically speaking, to stop the influx (āsrava) of *karma*, which is called *saṃvara* or the covering of the channels through which *karma* finds entrance into the soul. According to Mahāvīra, when a man is free from passions and acts in strict compliance with the rules of right conduct, the actions thus produced lasts but for a moment, and is then annihilated. As regards the Jain rules of right conduct, Mahāvīra followed his predecessor Pārśva who spoke of four *Vratas*—not to kill, not to lie, not to steal and to be interested in worldly thing like property—to which he added a fifth, viz. not to be indulged in sexual intercourse. The four rules of right conduct, prescribed by Pārśva, were simply the moral values of tribal society which were ruthlessly undermined in the age of the Buddha and Mahāvīra.[2]

In western India, at a somewhat later date, a different type of religious system was evolved—the Bhāgavata or devotional religion—in which the outstanding feature was absolute devotion to one supreme god. Monotheism was the fulfilment of a process that began as early as the days of tribal disintegration. The idea of a supreme god ruling over the universe was based solely upon the new-fangled principle of absolute monarchy. In pre-class societies men had control over the gods; they believed that they could bring the forces of nature under their control by collective rituals and other performances. In class society, this belief was shattered to pieces; the gods represented the ruling class, to be pleased only by propitiation and devotion; and monotheism was the logical consequence of this process. The quest for the divine prototype of a human monarch was marked

[1] *L*, 523.
[2] Bhattacharyya, *IMG*, 129-30

by the resuscitation of the Vedic god Viṣṇu and the pre-Vedic god who later came to be known as Śiva. But it was not until the third century BC that Vaiṣṇavism as a distinguished religious system could become popular. Śaivism got prominence in a somewhat later date.

It is against this background that we are to evaluate the historical role of the female principle in the aforesaid religious systems and also in post-Vedic Indian life. Unfortunately literary evidence helps us very little in this matter. We do not know what were the original tribal religions of the dynasties that ruled over the Magadhan empire and other adjoining kingdoms. Both Buddhism and Jainism claimed Bimbisāra and Ajātasatru, the Haryaṅka kings of Magadha, as their followers. The same probably held good in the case of other kings. It is possible that the kings and the nobles in their personal life followed their own domestic or dynastic or tribal religion and at the same time they patronised the newly preached ideas according to their individual choice. This was the cause of the survival of the old religious beliefs and practices and also of their making room into the new religious systems. Religion in the modern sense of the term did not bother the ancients, and just as a modern Santal after embracing Christianity does not hesitate to worship their traditional Boṅga, so also the ancients did not give up their traditional cults and rituals despite their attraction to this or that religion. Moreover, a man's inclination to a particular religion did not mean that all the members of his family, his sons and successors, should follow the same line. The Mauryan king, Candragupta patronised Jainism; his grandson Aśoka patronised Buddhism and his grandson Dasaratha patronised Ājīvikism. At the same time it was also the custom of the ancient kings to pay homage to the gods and rituals of the lands they would conquer. This was a very effective means of earning goodwill of the conquered peoples.

The Brahmanical religion itself did not perish due to the advent of Buddhism and Jainism. Men of the higher ranks still followed the old rituals prescribed by the Sūtras. Goddesses of the later Vedas—Ambikā, Durgā, Kātyāyanī, Śrī, Bhadrakālī, etc., whose cults became very popular in subsequent ages and many of whom later made their way into the Buddhist and Jain

religions—must have been widely worshipped. The popular influence of the female principle had already been reflected in the cult of Prajāpati-Brahmā. In fact, from the later Vedic age down to the age of the Mauryas and Śūṅgas, the cult of the female principle had a steady growth. It appears that the original tribal religion of the Maurya kings was that of the Mother Goddess. This we suggest on the basis of Lāmā Tārānātha's account of king Aśoka, according to which the king was not only the worshipper of Umādevī, the Mother Goddess, but also he actually encouraged the sexual rites connected with her cult, and thus came to be known as Kāmāśoka.[1] Tārānātha, while writing his history of Buddhism must have depended on some authentic tradition, although, unfortunately, all of his source-books have not yet been traced.

All that we have said in the preceding paragraphs regarding the cult of the female principle is based upon negative evidence. But some positive evidence is not altogether lacking. A small gold tablet representing a naked woman standing on her legs in symmetrical rigidity, with exaggerated hips and sexual organs, heavy and clumsy ornaments and in a rigidly angular composition, was dug out of a tomb near Lauriya.[2] It was identified by Bloch as the iconic representation of the Earth Goddess and was ascribed by him to about the 8th or 7th century BC. According to Rowland, some of the terracotta figurines of the Mother Goddess of pre-Maurya date are closely related stylistically and iconographically to the gold plaque from Lauriya, having the same flatness and frontality and the same emphatic display of the attributes of fecundity—the heavy breasts and the enormously exaggerated sexual organ—characteristic of the earlier representations of the Mother Goddess found all over the ancient Near East.[3] A small gold tablet similar to that found at Lauriya and a small gold figure, forming part of the relics from the ruins of the Piprahwa Stūpa and belonging to a period not earlier than that of the Mauryas, and also some of the oldest terracotta pieces recovered by Marshall from the

[1] Chattopadhyaya, *HBT*, 53.

[2] Bloch in *ASIAR*, 1906-7, 122ff; Bachhofer, *EIS*, I, 14-15.

[3] *AAI*, 23.

ruins of Bhita prove the continuity of the cult of the female principle.[1]

The political condition of Northern India till the 5th and 4th centuries BC was not that of an empire of any considerable extent, but it was that of separate and small independent states and kingdoms under a king or tribal chief. It was only towards the third quarter of the 4th century BC that the ideal of an empire was partially achieved by the Nandas. Then under the Mauryas Magadha became the mistress of extensive dominions stretching from beyond the Hindu Kush in the west and to the hills of Assam in the east, and from Kashmir in the north to Mysore in the south. The concept of absolutism in politics and society, as we have stressed elsewhere in this chapter, had a close bearing on the development of monotheistic ideas in the sphere of religion. From about the end of the third century BC Vaiṣṇavism began to flourish as a distinct creed supporting the cause of absolute monarchy and encouraging the destruction of the old tribal values. The *Mahābhārata* upholds the idea of the political unification of India under a Cakravartin, the human prototype of the divine Viṣṇu, mastering over the universe. The *Bhagavadgītā*, a part of the *Mahābhārata*, composed about the second century BC, equates the king with god and demands total submission of the individual to the divine will. Arjuna, the hero, was reluctant to kill his kinsmen, which was the supreme tribal taboo, and this taboo had to be broken for the interest of newly developed values supposed to integrate the monopoly of state power. In this respect the *Gītā* frankly supplements the *Arthaśāstra* which is also guided by the same motive. Even to a stark atheistic religion like Buddhism, a monotheism in the form of Buddha as the Supreme Being and controller of the universe was prefixed, and this form of Buddhism, we know from history, served a very useful purpose in China in consolidating the state power. Śaivism as a distinct monotheistic religion flourished from about the beginning of the Christian era evidently with the same purpose

Soon after Buddha's death about 486 BC, his scattered sayings relating to Dhamma and Vinaya were put together in the first

[1] Ray, *MSA*, 6.

council, and about a century thereafter, in the second council held at Vaiśāli, the Buddhist church was divided into two groups—the Sathaviras and the Mahāsaṅghikas. The former became gradually divided into eleven sects and the later into seven. All the eighteen sects were fundamentally Hinayanists, keeping the religion confined exclusively among the monks. The common people were, however, allowed to take the *triśaraṇa*, observe a few moral precepts and offer gifts to the *saṃgha*, but there was no provision for organised worship and ritual. But a few sub-sects of the Mahāsaṅghika group already introduced new doctrines paving the way for Mahayanism which probably originated in its full form from about the first century in the Andhra country. It became a recognised form of Buddhism at the time of Kaṇiṣka and then it spread all over northern India in the first and second century AD. From this time Mahāyāna Buddhism came under the grip of the existing cults of the female principle. Early Buddhist sculptures, however, do not depict goddesses. The cult of the female principle also influenced the Jain religion in the same way about the beginning of the Christian era. As we have stated above, although the Bhāgavata sect, worshipping Vāsudeva, was known to Pāṇini and Megasthenes, it was not so prominent before the third century BC. The identification of Vāsudeva with Viṣṇu is not recognised even in the earlier parts of the *Mahābhārata*. Although the inscriptions from Besnagar (second century BC.), Ghosundi and Nanaghat speak of a steady growth of Vaiṣṇavism, iconographic representation of the god Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva cannot be traced much earlier than the beginning of the Christian era. The association of Viṣṇu and Vaisnavite deities with goddesses took place about the same period.

So we find that from about the beginning of the Christian era the popular cults of the female principle were gradually becoming the driving force even in the case of the 'higher religions' like Buddhism, Jainism and Vaiṣṇavism. We exclude Śaivism, because it had always been a popular religion, and so it had the greatest potentiality of absorbing the Mother Goddess elements, which we shall see later. The 'higher religions' were not originally the religions of the masses. The lists of the existing religious sects and cults, as found in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (fourth-third centuries BC.) and in the *Mahāniddesa* and *Cullaniddesa*

(second-first centuries BC.), demonstrate the existence, side by side with well known sects, of a bewildering variety of primitive faiths and cults—Ājīvika, Nirgrantha, Jaṭilaka, Parivrājaka, Aviruddhaka, Muṇḍa-Srāvaka, Māgaṇḍika, Traidaṇḍika, Gautamaka and Devadharmika, along with the worshippers of the elephant, horse, cow, dog, crow, Vāsudeva, Baladeva, Purṇabhadra, Maṇibhadra, the Yakṣas, the Nāgas, the Asuras, the Gandharvas, the Mahārājas, Agni, Candra, Sūrya, Indra, Brahman, Deva and Dik.

One of the interesting features of the aforesaid list is the cult of the Yakṣas. The Yakṣas and Yakṣiṇis were malevolent deities of primitive tribal conception and were worshipped in every village. Later they held a very important place in Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical myths, legends, and religions. The Yakṣas and Yakṣiṇīs were conceived as having a physical form of large proportions and huge bulk, and since they owed their existence to tribal primitive imagination, they had a heavy earthly character of form, as is found in their sculptural representations assigned to the first century BC. A study of the extant Yakṣa and Yakṣiṇī images shows that the later images of the gods and goddesses were shaped after them. Of the earliest Yakṣiṇī sculptures influencing the iconographic conceptions of the female principle of contemporary and later religious systems mention must be made of the Alakanandā and Sudarśanā Yakṣiṇīs of Barhut and also their Buddhistic partners Sirimā Devatā and Culakokā Devatā belonging to the first century BC. To the same period (*c.* 50 BC.) is assigned the Besnagar Yakṣiṇī, the modelling, the linear rhythm and the feeling for human form which are far in advance of Barhut. J. N. Banerjea was inclined to identify this image with the goddess Śrī. The Didarganj Yakṣiṇī which is the best of the series from the artistic point of view is not very much earlier than the first century AD.

The period about the beginning of the Christian era may thus be regarded as a turning point of Indian religious history. Original Buddhism and Jainism and also Vaiṣṇavism incorporated a large portion of the tribal cults all of which were cleverly woven in the texture of intellectual and rational scheme of doctrines. As a result, the old religious systems made their appearance in new and sophisticated garments. In view of this changed set up the

cult of the female principle had also acquired a new significance. Now let us see what the available data suggest in this respect.

The facts we have obtained from the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and the *Niddesa* commentary may be supplemented by those found in the *Mahābhārata* (between 400 BC and 400 AD) and the *Rāmāyaṇa* (between 200 BC and 200 AD). In both the epics we notice Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism becoming more prominent and widespread than other cults and dividing between them the allegiance of great masses of men. But the association of the female principle with Viṣṇu is less prominent in the *Mahābhārata* than that with Śiva. The only goddess who is brought in connexion with Viṣṇu is Pṛthivī or Mother Earth. In the *Durgāstotras* (hymns addressed to the goddess),[1] although the goddess is described as the younger sister of Kṛṣṇa', 'eldest-born in the family of the cowherd Nanda', 'born in the womb of Yaśodā', 'the favourite of Nārāyaṇa', 'the consort of Nārāyaṇa', etc., her Vaiṣṇavite association does not prove strong. On the other hand, it is in Śaivism that the ideas centering round Śakti or female principle have found a soil most favourable for their expansion. The history of Śaivism in many of its stages is not different from that of Śāktism, as we shall see later from the evidence furnished by the *Mahābhārata*.

In some early coins, sculptures and relief carvings we have representations of Gajalakṣmī, the goddess of wealth being anointed with water by two elephants standing on her either side. Four such representations are met with in Barhut. Lakṣmī in the sense of plenty occurs in the *Ṛgveda*, while in the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā* Lakṣmī and Śrī are described as co-wives of some god, and this tradition of their identity and difference continued down the ages. The cult of this goddess of wealth was taken up by the Buddhists, because it supplied a suitable means of worship to the trading class laity. Accordingly, the goddess was conceived in Buddhist mythology as the daughter of Sakra. The Sirimā Devatā of Barhut recalls Sirīdevī or Lakkhī mentioned in the Jātakas. With the growth of her popularity, Lakṣmī became Nagara-lakṣmī, the protectress of cities, and then Rājalakṣmī, fortune of the king. Popular stories about her departure from the city or kingdom were also invented. In literature reference

[1] *Mbh.*, IV.6. VI.23.

is made to the city-goddesses. The 'city-goddess and Indian bull' was the type of the Puṣkalāvatī coins. It appears that the cult of Śrī and Lakṣmi was popularised before the beginning of the Christian era and that she was not originally linked with Viṣṇu. Besides the Gajalakṣmī type, the goddess seated or standing on a lotus or standing with a lotus in hand, in some cases surrounded by flowering stems, are found inscribed on coins belonging roughly between the second century BC and the second century AD.

The figures of a goddess with two elephants on either side anointing her appears on the coins from Kausāmbi (first century BC), Ayodhyā and Ujjayinī (first century BC to first century AD).[1] Coins of Vāyudeva and Viśākhadeva (all of Ayodhyā) show the goddess standing while on those of Śivadatta she is shown seated. Such was the popularity of this device that many alien rulers of Northern India like Azilises (28-40 AD), Rañjuvula and Śoṇḍāsa (15 AD) adopted it on their coins.[2] Coins of Maues (20 BC-22 AD), Azes I (5 BC-30 AD) and Azes II show a female figure standing between trees. Marshall, following Whitehead,[3] says that the coins of Maues and Azes I depict Bachante among Vines (Maenad according to Gardner)[4] while those of Azes II represent Demeter with Cornucopia.[5] Coomaraswamy thinks that the said figures represent a Hellenised version of the *Padmavāsinī* or *kamalālaya* type of Lakṣmī.[6] The same deity again, without the attendant elephants, either seated on a full-blossomed lotus or standing with a lotus in her hand, very often appears on the Mathura coins like those of Gomitra, Dṛdhamitra, Sūryamitra, Viṣṇumitra, Puruṣadatta, Kāmadatta, Uttamadatta, Balabhūti, Rāmadatta and Śivadatta. She also appears on the coins of the Śaka Satrapas, of the Rājanya Janapada, and of the Pañcāla kings. The Kuninda coins illustrate a stag on the right of the goddess.[7] These coins can collectively be dated from the second century BC to the first century AD,

1 Allan, *CCAI*, 129-39, 148-58, 252.
2 *Ibid*, 131ff; Whitehead, *PMC*, I, 135.
3 *PMC*, I, 100-101, 122.
4 *BMC*, 70-71, 89.
5 *ASIAR*, 1914-15, 29-30.
6 *EA*, I, 175 ff.
7 Allan, *CCAI*, 159, 169-91, 194 ff., 210 ff.

and some of the figures found therein may even stand for Durgā.[1] The lotus on which a few of these goddesses are made to stand is not the characteristic of Lakṣmī alone. It is probable that the goddess who appers in the coins of Azes is Pārvatī or Durgā. References should also be made in this connexion to several unidentified goddesses of Hellenic character appearing on the copper and silver coins of Maues and Azes. The Babylonian Mother Goddess Inanna, worshipped in Syria as Nanaia or Nana in Chaldea Nane and in parts of India as Nānī, Naini, etc. occurs in the coins of the Kuṣāṇa king Kaṇiṣka (close of the first century AD).[2] On some of the coins of Huviṣka Śiva (Oeso or Bhaveśa) is depicted in company with this goddess described as Nānā. Another goddess, Umā (Ommo), appears on the coins of the same king with Śiva, holding a cornucopia, instead of a lotus, like Demeter, Tyche and Ardoksho. Coins of the Kuṣāṇa king Vāsudeva represent a throned goddess, whose right hand holds a fillet and left a cornucopia, bearing the Greek legend Ardokhso.[3]

Numismatic evidence thus shows the great popularity of the goddess-cult before and after the beginning of the Christian era, and what is derived from the coins may be substantiated by literary and sculptural evidence. A large number of stone discs, belonging to the period between second century BC and first century AD, found from Taxila, Kosam, Patna and other historical sites, depict nude figures of the goddess of fertility.[4] To the same period of time have been assigned a few terracotta figurines collected from such widely separated sites as Sarnath, Basarh, Bulandibagh, Kumrahar and other places round about the old sites of Pāṭaliputra, Bhita, Nagari, Samkisa, Kosam and Taxila. They represent females with heavy and exaggerated hips, round and prominent breasts and clearly marked navel and abdomen and seem to be associated with the primitive conception of the Mother Goddess.[5] A few specimens from Bhita, and Kasia belonging to the first century AC, display the Mother

[1] Banerjea, *DHI*, 108 ff.
[2] See Mukherjee, *NL*.
[3] *ASIAR*, 1910-11, 16.
[4] *ASIAR*, 1927-28, 66; Marshall, *MIC*, I, 62-63; Banerjea, *DHI*, 158 ff.
[5] Saraswati, *SIS*, 100-01.

Goddess.[1] Two figurines from Mathura[2] (now in the Boston Museum and in the Bombay PW Museum respectively) representing the Mother Goddess have been assigned by Kramrisch to the Mauryan period, but they really belong to a some what later date.

Numerous votive plaques with figures of deities found from the Bhir mound, Taxila, form a class of antiquities of the second century BC. In one very frequent type the goddess is shown with full-flowing skirts, in another she is depicted as holding a bird in her hand while in a third she carries a child.[3] A small female statuette, nude save for a shawl, which falls over the left arm and below the hips in front, assigned to the first century BC, comes from Sirkap. The figure appears to be derived from the Greek Aphrodite type, but much Indianised, probably representing the goddess holding lotus in her hand as portrayed in some coins mentioned above.[4]

A Gajalakṣmī representation occurs in the doorway of Anantagumpha, an Orissan cave which belongs to a period not earlier than the first century BC.[5] Such figures, described by some as the Nativity of the Buddha, or Gajalakṣmī in the Brahmanical specimens, or Śrī Devī or Padma Srī of the Jains, a frequent numismatic device at the same time, are found in abundance in different historical sites. An interesting specimen from Basarh, belonging to the first century BC, shows a winged goddess flanked on two sides by lotus stalks. The same site also yields a similar fragmentary specimen.[6] The winged goddess is again found in a bronze specimen from Dheri Akhun, in a stone relief from Mathura, and in a stūpa-bracket at Sirkap, all belonging to the first century AD. Images of Hāritī, the Buddhist goddess conceived as the protectress of children, belonging to the first century of the christian era and later date have been found in abundance.[7] The earliest representation of Mahiṣamardinī is said

[1] *ASIAR*, 1911-12, 71 ff.
[2] Kramrisch, *AIA*, pl. VI.
[3] Marshall, *GT*, 59.
[4] Marshall, *BAG*, 21; *T.*, II, 701; III, pl. 211.
[5] *CHI*, I, 638 ff.
[6] Coomaraswamy in *Ipek*, 1928, 71, fig. XXV; *ASIAR*, 1922-23, pl. X.B.
[7] *ASIR*, 1903-4, 76-77. 133; 1911-12, 107, 137; Majumdar, *GSIM*, II, 100; Hargreaves, *HSPM*, 44, 50; Marshall, *BAG*, 84.

to be offered by certain terracotta plaques discovered at Nagar near Uniyara in the Tonk District, which are now preserved in the Amber Museum. One of these has been assigned to the first century BC or first century AD. Sambhar has also yielded a terracotta plaque of white clay of Mahiṣamardinī believed to be of first cenury AD. The head of the plaque is broken. Excavations at Rairh in Rajasthan have yielded a very large number nude and semi-nude Mother Goddesses not earlier than the first century AD. Excavations at Kankali Tila, Mathura, have revealed some Jain specimens which offer an interesting study along the Buddhist and Brahmanical finds from other sites of the same place. Referring to an interesting headless statue of the goddess Sarasvatī dicovered from the excavations of the Jain Stūpa, Smith observes: "The goddess is shown sitting squatted with her knees upon a rectangular pedestal, holding a manuscript in her left hand. The right hand which was raised has been lost. The figure is clothed in very stiffly executed drapery, a small attendant with hair dressed in rolls stands on each side. The attendant on the left wears a tunic and holds a jar—the attendant on the right has hands clasped in adoration."[1] The pedestal bears an inscription relating to the dedication of the image in 54th year of Kaṇiṣka. The sculpture thus can be dated in the first half of the second century AD.

What we get from coins and sculptures is corroborated by literary evidence. Here we shall depend mainly upon the *Mahābhārata* which is said to have been composed between *c*.400 BC and 400 AD. It appears that sectarian religious ideas began to find their way into the Great Epic some time before the beginning of the Christian era.

The tribal basis of the Mother Goddess cult, her association with the hunting peoples, evidently survived in the days of the *Mahābhārata*, as it does survive even today. The Great Epic thus refers to the goddess residing in the Vindhyas (*Vindhye caiva nagaśreṣṭhe tava sthāṇaṃ hi śāśvatam*[2], the goddess who is fond of wine and meat (*sīdhumāṃsapaśupriyā*) and worshipped by the hunting peoples. In the *Kirātārjuna* episode,[3] Umā the divine

[1] Smith, *JSAM*, 56, pl. XCVIV.
[2] IV. 6. 18.
[3] III. 38-40.

consort of Śiva, is described as a Kirāta woman. In early Indian literature, the term *Kirāta* denotes a Himalayan people, but in a wider sense it seems to denote the hunting tribes in general.

The Dakṣa-yajña story as enumerated in the *Mahābhārata* indicates that the orthodox followers of the Vedic religion did not count Śiva and Devī in their pantheon. According to the *Mahābhārata*, Dakṣa arranged for a horse-sacrifice at Hardwar which was attended by all the gods. The sage Dadhīci happened to notice that Maheśvara (Rudra-Śiva), the consort of Pārvatī, was not present in the assembly, and when he asked Dakṣa the reason of Śiva's absence, the latter replied that there were eleven Rudras with matted hair and holding spear, and he did not know who was Maheśvara among them. This insult made Pārvatī angry, and in order to please her Śiva created Vīrabhadra. Mahākālī, also called Bhadrakālī, born of Devī's wrath, followed Vīrabhadra to the place of Dakṣa's sacrifice, and they destroyed the sacrificial materials.[1] The destruction of his sacrifice brought Dakṣa to his senses, and he was advised by Vīrabhadra to propitiate Śiva. Dakṣa prayed to Śiva, and having moved by his fervent appeal Śiva appeared on the spot and consoled Dakṣa delivering a brief lecture on his own religious views. "It should be noticed", remarks R.P. Chanda,[2] "that the Śiva whom Dakṣa ignored in his sacrifice was not the Vedic Rudra but the Śiva worshipped by the Pāśupatas. This legend of Dakṣa's sacrifice indicates that the Pāśupata conception of Rudra or Śiva arose outside the pale of Vedism and the orthodox followers of the Veda could not persuade themselves to acknowledge them readily. No share of sacrificial food is claimed on behalf of Śiva's consort, Durgā."

H.C. Raychaudhuri[3] thinks that the Epic Śiva finds a closer parallel in the deity called Teshub worshipped by the Hittites in Western Asia. Teshub was the spouse of the great Mother Goddess venerated as Mā in Cappadocia.[4] The word Umā is intimately associated with Mā or Amma, as we have seen above,

[1] XII. 282-83.

[2] *IAR*, 129.

[3] in *DRBV*, 301 ff.

[4] In her temple at Comana, women used to offer their bodies voluntarily. Frazer, *AAO*, 34.

and her connexion with Śiva recalls that of Mā with Teshub. The consort of Teshub stands on a lioness or a panther like the Cretan Rhea or the Phrygian Cybele or the Syrian Atargatis. The consort of Śiva is also *simhavāhiṇī*, having the lion for her vehicle. "The Father God at Boghaz-Keui, meeting the Mother Goddess on her lioness, is attended by an animal which according to the usual interpretation is a bull, and that the bull itself was worshipped, apparently as an emblem of fertility, at Euyuk near Boghaz-Keui; that at Tarsus and Boghaz-Keui, as at Hierapolis-Bambyce, the Father God and the Mother Goddess would seem to have had as their sacred animals or emblems the bull and the lion respectively.[1]

In the Svayamvara-parvādhyāya of the *Mahābhārata*[2] Draupadī is compared with Umā. Along with her consort she is again mentioned in the Sabhāparvan as a member of the court of Kuvera,[3] and twice in the Kirātaparvādhyāya.[4] Arjuna having returned from pilgrimage informed his brothers of his meeting with Śiva and Umā.[40] She is mentioned in relation to Skanda's birth[5] and Jayadratha's Śiva worship and also as the presiding deity of the northern quarters.[7] In Arjuna's Durgāstotra,[8] Umā occurs as a Mother Goddess and elsewhere[9] she is mentioned along with Aditi, Hrī, Śrī, Svāhā, Sarasvatī and others. In the Dakṣa-yajña episode and also in a section entitled Śiva-Umā Saṃvāda[10] Umā is frequently mentioned.

Ambikā and Rudrāṇī or Rudrapatnī of the later Vedic texts occur in the *Mahābhārata*.[11] The hill association of the goddess is indicated by such names as Śailaputrī, Sailarājasutā, Girisutā, Girirājatanayā, Parvatarājakanyā, Mandaravāsinī, etc.[12] Gaurī, Kālī, Mahākālī, Bhīmā, Mahābhīmā, etc. are also referred to in

[1] Frazer, *AAO*, 131.
[2] I. 187/189.
[3] II. 10/11.
[4] III. 38-40.
[5] III. 166/167.
[6] III. 227/228.
[7] III. 271/272.
[8] V. 110/111.
[9] VI. 23.
[10] IX. 45.
[11] XIII. 140-48.
[12] Sorensen, *I*, s.u.

the *Mahābhārata*. It is however in the *Durgāstotras* of the Great Epic that the Devī is first revealed in her true character. The said hymns (IV.6; VI.23), although belong to a later period, are significant because they reveal the process through which numerous local goddesses combined into one in terms of an all-powerful female principle.

Elsewhere we have seen that in the *Mahābhārata* it is for the first time that Mother Earth is brought in relation to Viṣṇu. It is said that when she became burdened with excessive pressure of population, she sank down for a hundred *yojanas* and sought the protection of Viṣṇu who in his turn took the shape of a one-toothed boar and lifted her above.[1] A rudimentary form of this legend is found in the Ādiparvan in which the over-burdened Earth goes to Brahman and seeks his protection.[2] In the *Mahābhārata*[3] we come across the city goddess of Magadha, called Rākṣasī, Jarā, who was also the protectress of children. Her legend, as found in the Great Epic, has a significant bearing on the evolution of the cult of the goddess Ṣaṣṭhī and that of the Buddhist Hāritī. The city goddesses of the Semitic world was also protectress of children. A number of protectress Mothers were also associated with the birth of Skanda. They were known as Kākī, Halimā, Mālinī, Vṛṅhilā, Āryā, Palālā and Vaimitrā. Evidently these were local goddesses. Skanda's wife Devasenā was also known by such names as Ṣaṣṭhī, Lakṣmi, Āśā, Sukhapradā, Sinivālī, Kuhū, Satvṛtti and Aparājitā which proves that she absorbed a good number of Vedic goddesses.[4]

A more concrete idea of the popularity of goddess cult in the first three centuries of the Christian era may be formed from the evidence furnished by the Tīrtha-yātrā section of the Vanaparvan of the *Mahābhārata*,[5] which refers at least to three holy places associated with the *yoni* (sexual organ) and *stana* (breast) of the Devī. These are the Yonikuṇḍas at the Bhīmāsthāna near the Pañcanada (Punjab) and on the hill called Udyatparvata, and the Stanakuṇḍa on the peak known as Gaurīśikhara. The name of the Gaurīśikhara (literally the peak of Gaurī, the

[1] III. 141.
[2] I. 64.
[3] II. 17-18
[4] III. 223-228.
[5] III. 82 ff.

Mother Goddess) probably connects the peak with the Himalaya. The Stanakuṇḍa may be brought in relation to Jālandhar which later became a *mahāpīṭha* where the breast of Śatī fell. The Bhīmāsthāna, literally, the resort of Bhimā, a form of the Mother Goddess, was situated on the Karamar not far from Shahbazgarhı in the Peshawar district, "It should be pointed out that hills or mountain peaks rougly resembling a human phallus were regarded in ancient times as the *svayambhū* (natural) *liṅga* of Śiva. There is reason to believe that the tanks or pools of a particular shape were often conceived as the *Yoni* of the Mother Goddess. A pair of hills or peaks of the shape and position of female breast appear sometimes to have been likewise regarded as the *stana* of the goddess."[1] The Tīrthayātrā section also speaks of other holy places—Matṛ-tīrthas or Devī-tīrthas—connected with the goddess cult. Of these, Puṣkara and Kurukṣetra were associated with the goddess Sāvitrī or Gāyatrī, and Śākambharī tīrtha with the great goddess Sākambharī of the Purāṇas, mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* also as Suvratā-devī. Other holy places like Kālikā-saṅgama, Lalitā, Campā, Dhūmāvatī, etc. seem to be associated with the cult of the female principle.

The *Rāmāyaṇa* was composed between the second century BC and the second century AD. It appears that Śitā, the heroine of the epic, was originally an earth goddess. She is said to have sprung from Mother Earth and in the end she disappears again into her womb. The word *Rāma*, the name by which the hero is known, is derived from *ram* which denotes ploughing and sexual intercourse. In the ancient hymns of the Vedas, Sītā is simply the furrow which bears crops for men.[2] In the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya[3] the goddess Sītā is conceived as residing in seeds and plants. Referring to the vegetative aspects of the Devī, the *Harivaṃśa*[4] says that she is Sītā to the ploughmen. Sir William

[1] Sircar, *SP*, 8, cf. Kālidāsa' description of the Malaya and Dardura mountains in *Raghu*, IV. 51.

[2] *RV*, IV. 57; III, 17 ff; *YV*, XII. 69-72; *Gobhila GS*, IV, 4.27-30; *Pāraskara GS*, II. 17.9-10; cf. Hopkins in *JAOS*,XVIII, 85n; Keith, *RPV*, 186; *VBYS*, 306; *SBE*, XXIX, 334; XXX, 113-14.

[3] I. 24.

[4] Viṣṇu, III. 14. (LVIII).

Jones informed us that the Peruvians styled their greatest harvest festival *Rāmasitoa.*[1] It is ritual that sustains myth: from the ancient agricultural rituals developed the myths of Sītā, and one such myth was rendered into the form of an epic by the great poet Vālmīki. The similarity of Demeter-Persephone myth with the main story of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is too striking to be ignored. The heroine of the epic is born of a field furrow, abducted by a Pluto of the underworld, and after all her adventures she returns to the earth. The story of the quest of Sītā by Rāma and his troops resembles that of Demeter's quest for Persephone or that of the quest of Isis for the body of Osiris.

The present form of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, especially its seventh book, was composed under Vaiṣṇavite influence. The female principle is generally worshipped by the Vaiṣṇavas as the consort of Viṣṇu in the form of Lakṣmī or Śri. There are many passages identifying Rāma with Viṣṇu, and in one such passage[2] Sītā, Pṛthivī and Śrī are described as the wives of Rāma. Śrī, the goddess occurring frequently,[3] is sometimes mentioned with Hrī, Kīrti, Lakṣmī, Bhūti and others,[4] goddesses associated with Durgā in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Harivaṃsa*. Sometimes Śrī and Lakṣmī are differentiated.[5] Bhū or Mother Earth, identified with Vaiṣṇavī in the *Mahābhārata* and traditionally regarded as the second wife of Viṣṇu, also occurs in the *Rāmāyaṇa*,[6] variously designated as Medinī, Mādhavī, Dharaṇī etc. The rivers Sarasvatī and Ganges are deified.[7]

The *Rāmāyaṇa* also betrays some Śaivite passages in which we have references to Umā, sometimes called Pārvatī, mentioned as the younger sister of Gaṅgā, born of Menā by Himālaya.[8] She lengthened the life of Sukeśa, the deserted offspring of the demon Vidyutkeṣa and granted a boon to the demons (Rākṣasas) that their children would get the age of their mothers

[1] *W*, I. 30.
[2] II.4.17.
[3] II.70.72; 79.15; VI.111.89; 113.21; VII.9.9; 47.9.
[4] III.46.17; VII.5.31.
[5] II.44.19; VI.33.14; 91.68; VII.47.8.
[6] II.1.34; VII.72.42; 72.52; 110.14-16; 110-19.
[7] II.52.85-91; VII.10.46; 18.28.
[8] I.35.19-23.

immediately after their birth.[1] The legend shows that Umā had a soft corner for the non-Vedic peoples, her original worshippers. Even Rāvaṇa was not deprived of Śiva's grace.[2] More beautiful than Śrī,[3] Umā was not in good terms with other gods.[4] Once while she was uniting with Śiva for the purpose of a son, the gods disturbed them, and thereupon she cursed the gods that they would never beget children. She also cursed the Earth who absorbed the seed of Śiva that she would be the wife of many and never be happy with her children.[5]

Four Vedic goddesses *viz.* Diti, Aditi, Sacī and Rātri occur in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, though not in their original character. Devī Laṅkā,[6] the protectress of the city of Laṅkā, recalls the Semitic city-goddesses Surasā,[7] the serpent-mother, came from tribal religion. No goddess of a purely Śākta character is mentioned in the *Rāmāyaṇa.* Only Kālikā is mentioned once.[8]

The *Harivaṃśa*, a supplement of the *Mahābhārata*, composed not earlier than the first century AD, contains *Āryāstavas*[9] in which the goddess is invoked by numerous names and epithets. Such names as Kālarātri, Nidrā, Kātyāyanī, Kauśikī, Virūpā, Virūpākṣī, Viśālākṣī, Mahādevī, Kaumārī, Caṇḍī, Dakṣā, Śivā, Kālī, Bhayadā, Vetāli, Śakuni, Yoginī, Bhūtadhātrī, Kusmāṇḍī, etc. later became popular as names of the Tantric goddesses. A few of her epithets like Hrī, Śrī, Kīrti, Lajjā, Prabhā, Dayā, Mati, etc. refer to abstract qualities and these may be traced to the Vedas. The *Harivamśa* refers to the association of the goddess with the non-Vedic hunting peoples like the Śabaras, the Barbaras and the Pulindas. Her association with the animals is also indicated. The work was composed by the worshippers of Viṣṇu who could not avoid the increasing influence of the popular cult of the female principle. Thus the virgin goddess

[1] VII.4.28-31.
[2] VII.17.
[3] VII.42.30.
[4] I.36.6-25.
[5] I.18.12; II. 15.22; 25 35; 93.22; IV. 1.119; VII. 11.14-16.
[6] V:3 21-51.
[7] V.1. 139-64.
[8] VI.35.28.
[9] Viṣṇu, III, CXXII. (LVIII, CLXXVII).

Kauśikī, the supposed sister of Indra, residing in the Vindhyas and worshipped with animal sacrifice, was taken into the Vaiṣṇava pantheon and conceived as the daughter of Yaśodā and the consort of Nārāyaṇā.

Now let us turn our attention to the South. The primitive Mother Goddess cult survives in South India even today. The village Mothers are related not to the great world forces but to such simple matters as Cholera, Small-pox, Cattle-disease, etc. They were worshipped with animal sacrifices. The priests are not Brāhmaṇas. The names of the goddesses are legion, some of them having an obvious meaning, and others quite unintelligible even to the people themselves. They differ almost in every district and often the deities worshipped in one village are quite unknown in other villages five or six miles off. Very probably these village cults developed at the Neolithic period when the people began to settle down in agricultural communities. Some of the ancient village Mothers became prominent in subsequent ages.

The currency of the cult of the female principle in South India in the early centuries of the Christian era is amply indicated in early Tamil literature, the Saṅgam Classics, in which occur such goddesses as Amarī, Kumārī, Gaurī, Śamarī, Śūlī, Nīlī, Aiyai, Sayyavaḷ, Korravai, Nallāl, Kaṇṇi, Śaṅkarī, etc. Of the goddesses, Kumārī, the virgin goddess Kanyākumārī of the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* who gave her name to the southernmost point of India, is mentioned in the *Periplus*. "Beyond this there is another place called Comari at which are the Cape of Comari and a harbour; hither come those men who wish to consecrate themselves for the rest of their lives, and bathe and dwell in celibacy and women also do the same; for it is told that a goddess here dwelt and bathed."[1] The *Periplus* was composed about *c*. 80 AD. Next important goddess is Korravai, the great mother of Muruga,[2] identified with Malaimagal,[3] daughter of the mountain' *i.e.*, Pārvatī. Her dance was known as *tunaṅgai*. According to the *Tolkappiyam*, the earliest Tamil grammatical

[1] Schoff, *PES*, 46.
[2] *Perumbaṇārṛuppaḍai*, 457 ff.
[3] *Tirumurugārṛuppaḍai*, 258 ff.

work, Koṟṟavai was the goddess of the region of Pālai. This goddess is frequently mentioned in early Tamil literature, as we shall see later.

The story of the deification of a human being called Kaṇṇaki into Pattanikaḍavul, the goddess of chastity is met with in the great Tamil epic *Śilappadikāram* (second century AD). This lady destroyed the city of Madurā by fire to avenge the execution of her husband Kovalan, Kosar, the king of Kaṅgu, Gajabāhu, the king of Laṅkā, Peruṅk-killi, the Cola king, and the Cera king Senguttuvan erected temples and instituted festivals in her honour. The Bhagavatī temple of Cranganore in Kerala, dedicated to Bhadrakālī whose wrath is supposed to be the cause of all epidemic diseases, is said to have been found between the years 115-25 AD by Senguttuvan Perumal to commemorate the tragic end of Kaṇṇaki, the heroine of the *Śilappadikāram*.[1] The goddess enshrined at Cranganore, according to the popular tradition, goes by the name of Oṟṟaimulaicci, *i.e.*, goddess with one breast. Kaṇṇaki is said to have cut off one of her breasts when she cursed the city at the death of Kovalan.

How and when the Kaṇṇaki cult was assimilated with and finally absorbed into the Kālī or Bhagavatī cult cannot be said at our present state of knowledge. In the *Śilappadikāram*[2] we have references to the worship of Kālī. On their way to Madurā, Kaṇṇaki and Kovalan stopped at a Kālī temple where they witnessed a weird dance of the priestess of Kālī who, attired like the dread goddess, stood up in the village common and trembling all over as if she was possessed by a devil declared in terrific tones that the goddess Kālī was angry, as the Maravar had not offered any sacrifice at her temple for sometime past.

In the *Śilappadikāram* also occur such goddesses as Aryāṇi, Aiyai Kumārī, Āpya, Antari, Bārati, Pitāri, Māyaval, Koṟṟavai, etc. Aryāni is the Tamil name of Indrāṇī. Aiyai-Kumārī is the goddess worshipped by the Vaḍuvar or Maṟavar and she is known by different names. Pitari or Cāmuṇḍā is conceived as one of the seven Lokamātās or divine mothers. We have already referred to the goddess Koṟṟavai, known as the goddess

[1] *IHQ*, II, 621-22.
[2] XI-XII.

of victory. The Eyinor of Palai worshipped her and sacrificed buffaloes at her temple. According to the *Śilappadikāram*,[1] peacocks and parrots, fowls, sandal, grains and oblations of rice with flesh and blood were offered to her. Her hair was matted. She was clad in skins of tiger and cobra while a stag was her vehicle. She was so much dreaded that when once the doors of her shrine could not be opened, the Pāṇḍya king felt that it was due to the divine displeasure and sought her mercy by the grant of the revenue of two villages for her worship.[2] According to the *Kalittogai*,[3] the she-devils taught her how to dance while the *Kuṛuntogal*[4] calls her Śūli, *i.e.*, wielder of the trident.

The idea that Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Pārvatī, etc., represent different aspects of the same power is evident from the *Venba* in Canto XXII of the *Śilappadikāram*. The cult of Durgā is also found in the *Veṭṭuvavari* of the same epic. Durgā is described as "having a body, the colour (dark blue) of which resembles that of a flower of the *Kaya* (Memecylon edule), lips red like the coral, teeth white and neck dark, with a third eye on the cresent like forehead, holding the discus and conch, sword and *śūla* (Spear) and the bow which was the *meṛu* (neḍumalai) strung with the snake Vāsuki as its ñān (bow-string), wearing the skin of a tiger and a belt *(mekalai)* of lion's skin, a *Kaḷal* (hero's calf-band) on one leg and *śilambu* (woman's anklet) on the other, with a coiffure of *jaṭā* adorned by a serpent and the crescent moon, covering herself with the hide of the elephant as *uttarīya (ẻkāśam,)* wearing a snake as her breast-band *(kaccu)*, carrying a standard of lion *(āḷikkodi)*.[5] The goddess standing on the cut off head of a buffalo, a frequent sculptural representation of South India, is found in the epic which also describes her fight with the Asuras, her killing of Dāruka and Mahiṣāsura. The worship of Manimekalai, the chief guardian deity of the sea, is seen throughout in the south in the epics, especially in the *Manimekalai* (second century AD). In the said epic, she acted as the guide of the heroine who was her

1 XII.22-29.
2 XX, 37-40; XIII.113-25.
3 LXXXIX, 8.
4 CCXVIII.1.
5 *UMU*, XXXII, 152.

namesake.[1] Another goddess who is mentioned with special importance in the *Manimekalai*[2] is Cintā Devī who is said to have given a cup, which was never empty, to Aputra, a pious youth of obscure origin. The *Manimekalai* also refers to a forest-goddess called Kāḍamarśelvi[3] who was also known as Kāḍuraikaḍavuḷ, Moti, Karitāy etc. She is described as standing with a beggar's bowl and generally worshipped in temples adjacent to the burial grounds.

In the concluding paragraph of the second chapter we indicated the ultimate triumph of the female principle. It did really happen, at least its progress during the period before and after the Christian era is testified by the dappled evidence furnished above. The cause of the increasing popularity of the female principle was evidently connected with the changing social patterns arising out of the new economic conditions resulting from changes in the mode of production, expansion of internal and external trades, centralised state authorities and the growth of urbanism. The caste system had by this time become a regular social institution. The agriculturists and other professionals, apart from the priestly, warrior and trading classes, did form the majority of the population, and it was the religion of this majority, the Mother Goddess of the agriculturists, that found its way into the higher levels of society under diverse historical conditions. The higher religions, in order to get themselves popular among the masses and widely preached, had to make compromise with the existing cults and beliefs, and this was one of the processes through which female divinities of the lower strata of society could have easy access therein. Goddesses in considerable number came from the tribal proples who, unable to maintain themselves by their traditional mode of production, had to come in contact with the advanced peoples and were put in different social grades on the basis of the quality of services they offered to the existing class society. Thus the tribes subsisting on war and plunder could easily become Kṣatriyas by offering their war-services to the king while these depending on lower

[1] VI-X.
[2] XIII-XIV.
[3] cf. *Ahananūru*, 345.3-7.

occupations *(hīnaśilpas)* formed sub-castes among the Śūdras. Such a process, of tribes coming into the fold of caste system, had always been an important characteristic of Indian society, and its religious reflex was also of great historical consequence.

4

RISE OF ŚĀKTISM: THE GUPTA AGE AND AFTER (AD 300-700)

The history of the Gupta empire, which made its glorious start about 320 AD carries us to the middle of the sixth century AD. In one sense the Gupta age was really the golden age in Indian history. It was during this period that India made splendid achievement in the domain of art, science and literature and Indian civilization reached a unique stage of development which left its deep impress upon succeeding ages. The conquest of almost the whole of the Ganges valley by Samudragupta (335-380) and that of Malwa, Gujarat and Kathiawar by his son Candragupta II (380-414) ensured the advantages of a strong well organised government for the richest and most populous regions of India. The sound administration of the Gupta rulers contributed to an unprecedented economic development of the country. In the field of production there was state encouragement as is proved by the Junagarh Rock inscription of Skandagupta which records the restoration of the Sudarśana lake at Girnar. This policy of economic encouragement also helped the expansion of internal and foreign trade. The high standard of living and the luxury of town life to which the literary records of the Gupta age, especially the *Kāmasūtra*, bear witness, give a fair idea of the economic prosperity enjoyed by the upper class of the society.

At the same time, the common people actually engaged in the field of production, on whose labour rested the prosperity of the upper classes, had to live a miserable life, as is expected in a class society. The Śūdras were not allowed to live in the locali-

ties inhabited by the higher castes, and they had no share to the privileges given to others.[1] The Caṇḍālas could not walk about during night and even during day time they had to move about with distinguishing marks. Fahian[2] remarked that the Caṇḍālas lived outside the boundaries of towns and market places and were regarded as untouchables. A similar fate of the lower peoples was recorded by Hiuen Tsang.[3] To a great extent forced labour and slave labour were employed in the field of production. The former belonged exclusively to the state while the latter to the individual entrepreneurs. Hired labour was employed for agriculture, cattle-rearing, industry and trade, the appointments being on purely temporary basis. The labour-laws, enumerated in the *Smṛtis*, were frankly in favour of the owners and employers.[4] The cities were full of thieves and beggars. Prostitution was a regular social feature. Girls and women belonging to the unprivileged class were cleverly seduced by wealthy persons (the method is fully enumerated in the *Kāmasūtra*) who used them as concubines for some time, and after that they had to adopt the ugly life of public women.

The crisis of the decline and fall of the Gupta empire during the latter half of the sixth century made India once again divided into a number of independent states. In the seventh century Harṣavardhana was able to consolidate his power in Northern India on the ruins of the Gupta empire, but the focal point of political history had already been shifted to the Deccan and South India where the Cālukyas and the Pallavas could establish powerful empires of long duration. The defeat of Harṣa by the Cālukya king Pulakeśin was not merely a military defeat. It marked not only the end of Northern supremacy over the South but also the beginning of Southern supremacy over the North. Henceforth we have a series of Southern influx towards the North, political as well as cultural. From the seventh century onwards, religious movements of the South began to exert tremendous influence on the North. The prosperity of the South, as is revealed by her architectural greatness, was evidently due to the inter-oceanic trade, of which the North

1 Kauṭilya, II, 4; cf. *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, LIII, 70, 91; LXXII, 84.

2 Giles, *TFH*, 21.

3 Watters, *YCTI*, *I*, 147.

4 See Kane, *HD*, III, ch. XX.

was deprived. The disintegration and fall of the Roman empire, caused mainly by the Vandalism of the Teutons and the Huns, acted severely upon the overland trade-routes connecting North India with Rome. The natural flow of foreign trade when thus ceased abruptly, the North faced a grave economic crisis, ultimately leading to her political and cultural decline.

The new social and economic set up of the Gupta age changed radically the whole religious outlook of India. The ceremonial worship of the images of Viṣṇu, Śiva and the Buddhist and Jain deities, along with their consorts, installed in numerous temples of magnificent proportions, became a very important feature of religious life, the installation of such temples and images being evidently due to the social surplus introduced by the new economic conditions. There was none to care for the old Vedic religion. Buddhism changed qualitatively from the pristine simplicity of an austere moral code to the most complex system of Mahāyāna. In the case of other religions the change was still quantitative. The progress of Jainism was slow in the process of transformation, while Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism came in closer connexion which was marked by the attempt to establish the unity of Viṣṇu and Śiva and to combine in a single iconographic motif the attribute of different Vaiṣṇavite and Śaivite deities. To Viṣṇu and Śiva was added Brahmā of the older pantheon, and they formed the official trinity. Also a qualitative change took place in the cult of the female principle. The mass-strength behind it placed goddesses by the side of gods of all religions, but by doing so the entire emotion centering round the female principle could not be channelised. So need was felt for a new religion, entirely female dominated, a religion in which even the great gods like Viṣṇu or Śiva would remain subordinate to the goddess. This new religion came to be known as Śāktism.

By the end of the third centuary AD Jainism could become one of the principal religions of India. It was popular in Kalinga, Mathura and Malwa, and also in parts of the Deccan and South India. The Gaṅga kings of Mysore and the Kadamba rulers of Banavasi were patrons of Jainism. About AD 512 the Second Jain Council was held at Valabhī where the Jain canon took its present shape. The Khaṇḍagiri caves of Bhuvaneśvara

contain some standing and seated Jina images of the later Gupta period. The Sātgharā cave, the northernmost of the Khaṇḍagiri group, contains two rows of carvings on its rear wall. The upper row represents seven Tīrthaṅkaras and the lower seven female figures guarded by Gaṇeśa. It is the Jain version of the existing Saptamātṛkā concept showing that the Jains had by this time adopted the cult of the Divine Mothers as a submission to the demands of the lay followers of the creed. The female figures are variously depicted, ten-armed, four-armed and two-armed, the first five of which reminds us of Brahmāṇī, Vaiṣṇavī, Indrāṇī, Maheśvarī, and Kumārī, as is suggested by their emblems, while the sixth and the seventh stand probably for Padmāvatī and Ambikā, the Jain counterparts of Manasā and Durgā. All of them, except the first, sit in *lalitāsana*, while the fourth, fifth and seventh carry a small child in their arms. According to B.C. Bhattacharyya,[1] the fifth cannot be identified while the others stand for Cakreśvarī, Ajitādevī, Duritāri or Prajñapti, Gaurī or Mānavā, Padmāvatī and Ambikā respectively. Another section of the same cave contains two rows of figures, the upper showing the 24 Tīrthaṅkaras, the lower 24 female figures, the corresponding Śāsanadevatās of the former. Jain texts like *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, *Ācāra Dinakara*, etc. show in their classification of Jain goddesses that many of them were adaptations from the existing cults. The Śāsanadevatās or goddesses are regarded as devoted adherents of the Jinas and they were to be worshipped with specialised rituals. Their names are as follows : Cakreśvarī, Ajitabalā, Duritāri, Kālikā, Mahākālī, Śyāmā, Śāntā, Bhṛkuṭi, Sutārakā. Aśokā, Mānavī; Caṇḍā, Viditā, Añkuśā, Kandarpā, Nirvāṇī, Balā, Dhāriṇī, Dharaṇapriyā, Naradattā, Gāndhārī, Ambikā, Padmāvatī, and Siddhāyikā. Of other Jain Goddesses, mention must be made of Śrī-Lakṣmī, the Mātṛkās and the Vidyādevīs. The Vidyādevīs are sixteen in number, the goddess of learning *par excellence* being Sarasvatī, while others were known by such names as Rohiṇī, Prajñapti, Vajrasṛṃkhalā, Kālī, Mahākālī, Gaurī, Mānavī, etc. The cult of the sixty-four Yoginīs was also adoped by the Jains.

[1] *JI*, 24 ff.

But the process of the transformation of Buddhism was more rapid. The older form of Buddhism lost its hold upon the people giving way to a new movement, the Mahāyāna. The followers of the Mahāyāna regarded the Buddha as eternal, without origin and decay, and as such beyond any description whatsoever. They indulged in certain speculations regarding the Buddha's body and gave currency to the *trikāya* conception which was further elaborated with the rise of a regular Mahāyāna pantheon. The latter came into being with five Dhyānī Buddhas, *viz.* Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi who were said to have issued out of Adi-Buddha (the Original Buddha) through contemplation. Each of these Buddhas was associated with a Bodhisattva and a goddess, called Tārā. A being destined to attain *bodhi* (knowledge) and become a Buddha in the long run was evidently a Bodhisattva, and as such every Mahāyānist was a potential Bodhisattva, but a few became more distinguished and ranked almost as gods. These Bodhisattvas—Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Vajrapāṇi, Samantabhadra, Ākāśagarbha, Mahāsthānaprāpta, Bhaiṣajyarāja and Maitreya—were highly advanced in spiritual perfection and could easily have attained Buddhahood, but refrained from doing so for the cause of the suffering humanity. The cults of Avalokiteśvara, the embodiment of compassion, and Mañjuśrī, the personification of wisdom, flourished in the Gupta age and survived for so many centuries. The former was associated with the goddess Tārā, the personification of knowledge (*prajñā*) while the latter with Lakṣmī or Sarasvatī or both. Subsequent Buddhism came under the complete grip of the Tārā cult which was evidently a force from outside. But who was this goddess? According to the Mahāyāna conception she is the primordial female energy, the consort of Āvalokiteśvara, who enables her devotees to surmount all sorts of dangers and calamities. A mere prayer to this goddess is sure to remove the eight *Mahābhayas* (great dangers). She is also known as the goddess Prajñāpāramitā, as it is by the fulfilment of this *pāramitā* that a Bodhisattva reaches the goal. Sometimes she is conceived as the supreme being, 'the mother of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.' She became a very popular deity in India, during the early centuries after Christ when the Mahāyāna pantheon was developing rapidly, and passed out of India to Tibet and China. In

Tibet, where her cult developed about the seventh century she was known as Sgrol-ma (Dol-ma) and conceived under quite a large variety of subsidiary forms.

Tārā was evidently admitted to the Mahāyāna pantheon from the older religions. The conception of this goddess is very primitive, and it is quite possible that in course of her conceptual development she had absorbed within herself a number of divinities representing different aspects of the female principle. The epithets Tārā Tāriṇī, attributed to the Devī in the *Mahābhārata* and the Purāṇas, may be traced to the *Yajurveda* in which the term Tārā, meaning 'the saviour' is an appellation of the god Śiva. Then there is the Sanskrit word *Tārā* or *Tārakā* meaning a star (*cf.* Persian *Sitārā*, Greek *Aster*, Latin *Stella* and English *Star* and also the names of such foreign goddesses as *Ishtar*, *Astarte*, *Atargatis*, *Astaroth* etc.) and the word might easily give the name of a goddess dwelling among the stars. Many such streams later culminated into the conception of Tārā whose cult was established in different parts of India by the sixth century AD. A good number of sculptural representations testifying the popularity of this goddess are found in the Buddhist caves of Western Deccan such as Ellora, Aurangabad, Kanheri, Nasik and others and also at Sirpur in Madhya Pradesh, but very few of them can chronologically be assigned to a period earlier than the sixth century AD. The earliest literary reference to a Buddhist worshipper of Tārā is found in Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*[1] which was also composed about the sixth century AD. From the seventh century onwards, the influence of the Buddhist Tārā began to be felt upon the religious systems of India and abroad. The significant changes which the Tārā cult brought in the Chinese way of religious life will be dealt with in the next chapter. In India, the development of the Śākta religion received a great momentum from the Tārā cult of the Buddhists. The Śākta Tārā, also called Ugratārā, Ekajaṭā and Nīla-sarasvatī is undoubtedly an adaptation of the Mahāyāna Buddhist goddess of the same name.

One of the most important features of Vaiṣṇavism in the Gupta period was the conception of Lakṣmī or Śrī as Viṣṇu's

[1] Gray's tr. 97.

wife. In Kalidāsa's *Raghuvaṃsa*[1] we have a description of Viṣṇu lying on the great serpent in the ocean of milk, with Lakṣmī rubbing his feet. As usual she bore the name Śrī, and the traditional epithets Hrī (modesty), Medhā (talent), Dhṛti (patience), Puṣṭi (growth), Kṣānti (forgiveness), Lajjā (bashfulness), Kīrti (fame), Bhūti (prosperity), Rati (love), etc. were attributed to her. Her figure appears in the lintels of Viṣṇu temples at Badami and Aihole. As the wife of Viṣṇu, Laksmī is mentioned in the Junagarh inscription of Skandagupta[2] and the Sarnath inscription of Prakaṭāditya,[3] while Śrī is mentioned in the Aphsad inscription of Ādityasena.[4] A Kadamba record of *c.* AD 500 begins with an adoration of Bhagavat with Śrī on his breast. Lakṣmī continued her function as the guardian angel of kings (rājalakṣmī) and cities (nagaralakṣmī). The Gajalakṣmī motif, used as a coin-device by both indigenous and foreign rulers a few centuries earlier, was adopted as a symbol for the administrative offices by the imperial Guptas, who styled themselves *Paramabhāgavata*, and also by other rulers belonging to the Gupta age and later, as is evident from numerous devices portrayed on terracotta and copper seals from Madhya Pradesh (Eran, Arang, etc.), Uttar Pradesh (Bhita, Rajghat, Kausambi, etc.) and Bihar (Basarh and Nalanda)[5]. The Arodokṣo-Lakṣmī type, the former probably identified with the latter by the Kuśāṇas, holding a cornucopia instead of lotus, continued to be copied by the foreign successors of the Kuṣāṇas, viz. the Kidara Kuṣāṇas and the white Huṇas (Toramāṇa, Mihirakula and some other Ephthalite kings), influenced the initial issues of the Guptas, but the artistic sense of the age freed the goddess shortly from the crude and stereotyped representation, and very soon she became a full-fledged Indian Lakṣmī, traces of which can be noticed on the early issues of Samudragupta. The identification of a goddess on the reverse of certain types of the Gupta coins has aroused some controversy because of her association with the lion and the lotus at the same time, e.g. the coins of the Candragupta-

1 Canto X.
2 CII, III, 56.
3 *Ibid*, 286.
4 *Ibid*, 200-208.
5 *ASIAR* 1903-4. 107ff; 1911-12, 52ff, 1913-14, 129ff; *MASI*, No 66; Banerjea, *DHI*, 194ff.

Kumāradevī type and of the Lion-slayer type of Candragupta II.

Originally Śrī and Lakṣmī, regarded as two personalities, were described as the two wives of Āditya. Later tradition made Śrī Mahāśvetā the two wives of Sūrya, one on either side of the sun image. This was followed by the still later conception of Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī as the two wives of Viṣṇu. In a few inscriptions e.g. in the Chastu inscription of Bālāditya,[1] Lakṣmī, as in the Kāvyas and Purāṇas, is a co-wife of Sarasvatī, jealously guarding her husband's attention. In the *Vikramorvaśīya*[2] of Kalidāsa, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī are represented as rivals, jealous of each other. In the *Kāmasūtra* of Vātsyāyana[3] we are told that the wealthy citizens used to flock every fortnight to the temple of the Goddess Sarasvatī to enjoy dramatic performances, etc. Skanda's wife Devasenā had Lakṣmī as one of her names, and Kubera, too, claimed her as wife at a later time. A second wife of Viṣṇu was supposed to be the Earth, called Vaiṣṇavī in some epigraphs, e.g. those of the Śarabhapura kings. Lakṣmī as the divine consort of Viṣṇu and also as the eternal female principle is mentioned in the writings of the Tamil Āḷvars. It is interesting to note that the *gopi* element in Vaiṣṇavism, which is the forerunner of the later conception of Rādhā as the eternal female principle associated with the supreme being Kṛṣṇa, is met with in the devotional songs of the Āḷvars. Āṇḍāl or Kodāi, daughter of Periyāḷvār, saw herself as one of Kṛṣṇa's *gopis*, and approached the god, her beloved, in that spirit.

The Gangadhar inscription of AD 423 speaks of a worshipper of Viṣṇu building a temple, full of the Ḍākinīs, in honour of the Divine Mothers "who utter loud and tremendous shouts in joy and stir up the oceans with the mighty wind rising from the magic rites of their religion.[4] This no doubt points to the influences of Śāktism upon the Vaiṣṇavas. The cult of the Divine Mothers, as we have seen above, made its way into the Jain religion. The early Cālukya rulers of Badami, whose family god was Viṣṇu, also worshipped the Seven Mothers associated with Kārttikeya.

[1] *EI*, XII, 13.
[2] V. 24.
[3] IV. 27-33.
[4] *CII*, III, 72.

But the influence of Śāktism was greater upon the Śaiva religion. We have stories of the resurrection of Satī, the first wife of Śiva, as Umā, her austerities to win her husband again, the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, their domestic life on the Kailāsa, and so on. Kālidāsa, the great Sanskrit poet and playwright, was probably a devotee of Śiva. His *Kumārasambhava* tells us the story of the birth of Kumāra, but the whole work centres upon Śiva the hero and the heroine. The two characters appear again in the *Kirātārjunīya* of Bhāravī, composed about the sixth century, in which the *Mahābhārata* story of the combat between Arjuna and Śiva in the garb of a Kirāta finds expression. Śiva and Umā occur, as the male and female principles, sometimes identified with the Sāṅkhya concepts of Puruṣa and Prakṛti, in the devotional hymns of the Saiva Nāyanmārs of South India. In the Ardhanārīśvara figures Śiva and Umā are blended together. There is an interesting type of this composite figure, the right half possessing all the iconographic features of Śiva and the left half those of Umā, in a Gupta seal found at Bhita. A number of sculptures depicting this theme, to be dated from the Gupta to the medieval period, have been found in different parts of India. The Badami Ardhanārīśvara stone panel is a good representative of such figures. Particular interest attaches to an image of Śiva and Pārvatī from Bhita, assigned to the Gupta age, showing the god and the goddess seated side by side on a throne.[1] The Śiva-Pārvatī image from Kosam, also assigned to the Gupta age, and an earlier sandstone relief of the same god and goddess, now preserved in the Mathura museum, deserve special mention in this connexion. The Kosam stone image inscription of Bhīmavarman stands on a broken vase which constitutes a standing group of Śiva-Pārvatī sculpture.[2] Pārvatī or Umā also appears in a terracotta plaque of the late Gupta period found among the ruins of an ancient Śiva temple of Ahicchatra.[3] Two pillars from Chandimau, belonging to the Gupta period, depict in each the image of Śiva and Pārvatī and the Kirātārjunīya story respectively.[4] The cites of Kosam also yield several terracotte

[1] *ASIAR*, 1911-12, 76.
[2] *CII*, III, 266.
[3] Banerjea, *DHI*, 471.
[4] *ASIAR*, 1911-12, 161 ff.

reliefs of Śiva and Pārvatī.

The relation between Śiva and Devī became more intimate in the Gupta age, as is suggested by the evidence of the earlier Purāṇas. The story of Dakṣa's sacrifice must serve as a good example. We have already seen that the *Mahābhārata* contains a Dakṣa-yajña story, according to which Śiva and Devī, not being invited at the sacrifice of Dakṣa, due to the ignorance of the latter of Śiva's existence, destroyed in anger the sacrificial materials through their agents Vīrabhadra and Mahākālī, which brought Dakṣa to his senses, who thereafter propitiated Śiva and was taught by the latter the mysteries of his cult. This story has further been developed in the Purāṇas. The *Vāyu Purāṇa*,[1] composed between the third and the fifth centuries AD, holds that Satī, the oldest of the eight daughters of Dakṣa, was married to Śiva, but the latter did never care to salute his father-in-law or to conceal his roughness. Sati's death and the destruction of Dakṣa's sacrifice are described in the *Vāyu Purāṇa* in two episodes. The first says that Satī, the wife of Śiva, having received a cool reception from her father became very much shocked and destroyed her body whereupon Śiva cursed Dakṣa. On the other hand, Satī was reborn as Umā in the house of Himalaya and was married to Śiva. The second story describes the event of Dakṣa's sacrifice which occurred when the Devī was no longer the daughter of Dakṣa. The *Matsya Purāṇa*,[2] composed about the seventh century AD, says that Rudra or Śiva was not invited because Dakṣa thought him a malevolent spirit unworthy of a rank among gods. Further developments of the story of Dakṣa's sacrifice, found in subsequent Purāṇic literature, will be discussed later. The Dakṣa-Yajña story, as enumerated in the earlier Purāṇas, points to the alliance of the female principle with Śiva, and it is not difficult to determine the process of such an alliance. While in the *Mahābhārata* the goddess appears indifferently as the wife of Nārāyaṇa and of Śiva, her later associations became increasingly Saivite.

In the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (fourth century AD) the female principle is regarded as Mahālakṣmī who is the consort of Viṣṇu. Even there are passages in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* which

[1] XXX. 38-47.
[2] XIII. 12-15.

describe the goddess as Viṣṇumāyā, the *śakti* or energy of Viṣṇu, and Nārāyaṇī, the wife of Nārāyaṇa. In spite of all this, Vaiṣṇavism was not very successful in bringing Śāktism in close alliance with it. This was due to the fact that Vaiṣṇavism failed to embrace within itself all the tribal elements associated with the Mother Goddess cult which Śaivism could do on account of its popular character. The fearful forms of the goddess, the cults of blood and wine, the rituals of sex, and many other allied practices did not suit the Vaiṣṇavite religious approach, and hence they were satiated only with the primary material of her composition, her feminine nature and the patent provision of maintenance proceeding from her.

So long we have dealt with what may be called 'dependent Śāktism', i.e. the cult of the female principle under the garb of Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Buddhism and Jainism. But 'independent Śāktism' had already made its appearance in the Gupta age. The Śākta principles find expression in the Devīmāhātmya section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (composed between the third and fifth centuries AD) in which the goddess is invoked thus: "Thou art the cause of all the worlds. Though characterised by three qualities even by Hari, Hara and other gods thou art incomprehensible. Thou art the resort of all; thou art this entire world which is composed of parts. Thou verily art the sublime original nature untransformed.........Thou art Medhā, O goddess; thou hast comprehended the essence of all scriptures. Thou art Durgā, the boat to cross the ocean of existence, devoid of attachments. Thou art Śrī who has her dominion in the heart of the enemy of Kaiṭabha. Thou indeed art Gaurī who has fixed her dwelling in that of the moon-crested god."[1]

The Śākta Devī in her developed form absorbed within herself innumerable goddesses representing different streams. The invocation, quoted above, mentions a few goddesses, who stand by themselves as independent deities, though the poet knew them only as forms of the great goddess unto whom they were absorbed. In the concluding portion of the *Devīmāhātmya* of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, the Devī assures the gods by granting them the boon that she will always become incarnate and deliver the

[1] Pargiter's tr.

whole world whenever it is oppressed by the demons. In the *Vaivasvata-manvantara*, when the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha will become too powerful, she, born as the offspring of Yaśodā and dwelling in the Vindhyas will destroy them both. Again, having become incarnate in the very horrible form of Raktadantikā she will slay and devour the demons of the *vipracitti* lineage and her teeth will become red, like the inside of a pomegranate. And again, after a period of a hundred years during a drought she will appear as Śatākṣī at the invocation of the sages. Then she will nourish the whole world with the life-sustaining vegetables, which will grow out of her own body, and thus will be famous as Śākambharī. At that time she will slay the great Asura named Durgama and become famous as Durgā. And again, assuming the terrible form of Bhīmādevī she will kill the Rākṣasas on the Mount Himavat. When the demon Aruṇākṣa will become a terror in the three worlds, she will slay him as Bhrāmarī.[1]

Gaurī, Śatākṣi, Śākambharī, etc. of the above list were undoubtedly developed forms of rudimentary Earth and Corn Mothers. In Rajasthan, Gaurī or Iśāṇī is the Corn Mother whose cult resembles that of Isis in Egypt, Demeter in Greece and Ceres in Rome.[2] She is also called Vāsantī since her festivals are held in spring. A prototype of the Earth Goddess Śākambharī is found in a terraccotta seal from Harappa in which the goddess is shown upside down with her legs wide apart and a plant issuing from her womb. A terracotta relief of the early Gupta age, found by Marshall from the ruins of Bhita, also shows a nude female figure, upside down with legs wide apart, and with a lotus issuing out of her neck instead of her womb. Śākambhari is also known as Annadā or Annapūrṇā, the goddess who bestows food to all. Śākambhari is still worshipped in a *pīṭha* of the some name near Saharanpur. She is the presiding goddess of the Sambhar lake and tutelary deity of the Cauhāns. A reference to this goddess and her resort is found in the *Mahābhārata*.[3] Raktadantikā, the goddess who is red all through according to the *Mūrtirahasya* which is evidently

[1] *cf. Vāmana Pu.*, LVI. 67-70.

[2] Tod, *AAR*, 1,570 ff. A detailed account of the Earth and Corn Mothers of India is given in my *IMG*, 18-32.

[3] III. 84.

a late product, also called Raktacāmuṇḍa and Yogeśvari,[1] is definitely a survival of the primitive Mother Goddess representing the age when red was considered to be the symbol of new life.[2] Bhīmādevī was an important goddess of North Western India whose shrine at Shahbazgarhi was visited by Hiuen Tsang in the seventh century. "About 50 *li* (nearly 8 miles) to the north-east of Palusha was a great mountain which had a likeness of Maheśvara's spouse Bhīmādevī of dark blue stone. According to the local accounts this was a natural image of the goddess; it exhibited prodigies and was a great resort of devotees from all parts of India; to true believers, who after fasting seven days prayed to her, the goddess sometimes showed herself and answered prayers. At the foot of the mountain was a temple to Maheśvaradeva in which the ash-smearing *tīrthikas* performed much worship."[3] The *Mahābhārata*, as we have seen above, refers to the *Yonikuṇḍas* at Bhīmāsthāna (place sacred to the goddess Bhīmā) near the Pañcanada (Punjab). Likewise the goddess Bhrāmarī is worshipped in Kashmir as Bhramaravasanī.[4] A goddess named Bhramarāmmā is popular in the South.

The second stream leading to the monotheistic Śāktism is represented by the Umā-Pārvatī group which developed under the garb of Śaivism. Umā of the *Kena-Upaniṣad* and that of the *Kumārasambhava* or the Purāṇas are not the same. The epithet Haimavatī (daughter of Himavat) was responsible for her identification with Pārvatī and Durgā. The latter, as we have previously remarked, was associated with inaccessible regions, and it is also possible that she was originally conceived as the protectress of forts (*durga*). A fanciful explanation of Durgā was, however, invented on etymological ground by associating her with the slaying of a demon called Durgama. Whether a demon-slayer or saviour, Durgā is equipped with arms, a feature which is totally absent in the conception of Pārvatī-Umā who is extremely homely as the daughter of Himavat, wife of Śiva, mother of Kumāra. It is interesting to note that of the earlier Purāṇas the *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa* and

[1] *Mālatīmādhava*, V; *Matsya Pu.*, CCLXI. 33-37; *Varāha Pu.*, XCVI.

[2] For the symbolism of red see my *IMG*, 17-18; *IPR*.

[3] Watters, *YCTI*, I. 221.

[4] *Rājataraṅgiṇī*, III, 394-431.

Matsya and of the later the *Kūrma*, *Śiva*, *Garuḍa*, *Brahma*, etc. do not insist upon the demon-slaying conception of the goddess and her terrible forms. This also holds good in the case of Kalidāsa's *Kumārasambhava*. It is in the *Mārkaṇḍeya* and *Vāmana* purāṇas, and also in the later Devī-oriented Purāṇas that we have her terrible demon slayer form which is represented by Caṇḍikā or Kauśikī and further developed by Kālī. The goddess Kauśikī was probably associated with the Kuśika tribes, and later came to be identified with the Kuśika tribes, and later came to be identified with Caṇḍikā. According to the *Devīmāhātmya* of the*Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, Kauśiki emerged from the muscles of Pārvatī, and the latter turned black and became known as Kālikā dwelling in the Himalayas. According to another conception of the same text, Kālī emerged from the forehead of Caṇḍikā with the purpose of killing the demons Caṇḍa, and Muṇḍa and having accomplished the task she got the epithet Cāmuṇḍā. From a grammatical point of view, however, Cāmuṇḍa cannot be derived from Caṇḍa-Muṇḍa, and hence Camuṇḍā and Kālī were different goddesses. Kālī is referred to in the *Raghuvamśa*[1] and in the *Kumārasambhava*[2] she is described as a Divine Mother.

Kauśikī, Caṇḍikā, Kālī, etc. were evidently adopted in the Śākta pantheon from the surviving tribal divinities Kālī in Kālañjara mountain, Caṇḍikā in Makarandaka and Vindhyavāsinī in the Vindhyas are mentioned in the *Matsya Purāṇa*[3] as the different manifestations of the supreme goddess, and her particular interest for wine and meat is found in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.[4] Aparaṇā, a name by which Kālī is sometimes identified, signifies a deity 'without her leaf-cloth'. This naked goddesses must have originally been worshipped by a tribe such as the Nagna-Śabaras (the naked Śabaras) of the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, just as the Buddhist deity Parṇaśabari was undoubtedly associated with the Parṇa-Śabaras (the leaf-clad Śabaras) of the same work. Bāṇabhaṭṭa, in whose time (seventh century AD) Śāktism became more or less an established religion, as is proved by his

1 XI. 15.
2 VII. 39.
3 XIII. 32 ff.
4 V. 2 84.

own poetry on the goddess, mentions in his *Kādambarī* the goddess cult of the wild Śabaras and the cruel rites involved therein. Also in his *Harṣacarita* he refers to the destructive character of the goddess. In Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā* the blood-thirsty goddess Kātyāyani or Bhagavatī of Kusumapura is mentioned. The *Gauḍavaha*[1] of Vākpati, composed about AD 725, describes a vivid picture of the aweful atmosphere of the temple of Vindhyavāsinī, the goddess who was worshipped by the Śabaras with human sacrifice. It also deals with the slaying of the buffalo-demon, the association of the goddess with the peacocks and her blood-thirsty character. In the *Mālatī-mādhava*[2] of Bhavabhūti, we find that near Padmāvatī there was a temple of the goddess Cāmuṇḍā who was worshipped with regular human sacrifices. Aghoraghaṇṭa, a Kāpālika, kidnapped the heroine with a view to sacrifice her at the altar of the goddess. This eighth century authority not only testifies to the prevalence of human sacrifice before the goddess, but also to the interesting fact that the Kāpālikas were followers of the goddess cult. In the *Mattavilāsa-prahasana* (attributed to Pallava Mahendravarman I *c*. 600-685 AD) detailed account of the Kāpālikas and their cults are described.

The Purāṇas, as we have them now, were written at different periods. Of the earlier Puranas, the *Vāyu*, *Brahmāṇḍa*, *Viṣṇu* and *Bhāgavata* mention the Guptas among the royal dynasties, and hence they cannot be regarded as finally compiled before the fourth century AD. The *Vāyu Purāṇa* is mentioned in the *Harṣacarita* and was therefore earlier than the seventh century AD. The same holds good in the case of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, because it is difficult to ignore the influence of its *Devīmāhātmya* section upon Bāṇa's *Caṇḍīśataka* and Bhavabhūti's *Mālatimādhava*. However, for the present work, we are inclined to follow the chronology suggested by Prof. R. C. Hazra according to which principal portions of the *Mārkaṇḍeya*, *Brahmaṇḍa*, *Vāyu* and *Viṣṇu* Purāṇas were composed before the fifth century AD, those of the *Bhāgavata* within the sixth century and of the *Matsya* between the sixth and seventh centuries.

[1] 285-347.
[2] Act V.

In the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, the Devī is primarily conceived as the war-goddess who not only confers victory and success on her worshippers in the battlefield but also actually participates in the war to deliver the world whenever it is oppressed by the demons. According to the *Devīmāhātmya* section of the said Purāṇa, the gods oppressed by the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha, went to the Himalayas and worshipped the goddess, whereupon Śiva or Kauśikī appeared from the *Kośa* (frame or muscle) of Pārvatī and said that it was she whom the gods were invoking for killing the demons. This Kauśikī is also identified with Kātyāyanī, Vindhyavāsinī, Caṇḍikā and Nandā. The name Kauśikī, as we have already pointed out, was connected with the Kuśika tribe, and the legend of her coming out from the *Kośa* of Pārvatī was evidently invented to rationalise the role of the tribal goddess into the frame-work of the Śākta conception of the Devī. The same also holds good in the case of Kātyāyanī, who probably belonged to the Kātya tribe, but it is stated that a mass of energy produced from the flames of the gods' anger caused by the misdeeds of Mahiṣāsura, was thrown into the hermitage of the sage Kātyāyana who nourished it to create the goddess. The goddess thus produced came to be known as Kātyāyanī whom Śiva gave his trident, Viṣṇu his disc, Varuṇa his conch, Agni his dart, Yama his iron rod, Vāyu his bow, Sūrya his quiver and arrows, Indra his thunderbolt, Kubera his mace, Brahmā his rosary and pot, Kāla his sword, Viśvakarmā his sword, Himavān his lion, and other gods their various weapons. Vindhyavāsinī, as the name implies, was a regional deity who came to be identified with Caṇḍikā, Kauśikī and Kātyāyanī, and especially with Nandā, the offspring of Yaśodā in the house of Nandagopa, who was made responsible for the slaying of Śumbha and Niśumbha.

Of all the major achievements of the Devī, the story of her fight with Mahiṣāsura became most popular as is proved by numerous Mahiṣamardini sculptures. The Mahiṣāsura episode of the *Devīmāhātmya* suggests in itself a nice outline of the Śākta conception of the Devī as the embodiment of an all-pervading power. The gods being defeated and driven out of the heaven by Mahiṣāsura hastened for the protection of Viṣṇu and Śiva. Having heard their grievances, Viṣṇu Śiva, and other gods emitted flames of anger from their eyes, and this was transformed into

a mass of intense energy which, shortly afterwards, took the shape of an exquisite lady, called Caṇḍikā, whose face was made by Śiva's energy, hair by Yama's, arms by Viṣṇu's, breasts by moon's, waist by Indra's, legs by Varuṇa's, hips by the earth's, feet by Brahmā's, toes by Sun's, hands and fingers by the Vasu's, nose by Kubera's, teeth by Prajāpati's, eyes by Agni's, and ears by Vāyu's. This conception of the goddess, her creation from the energy of all the gods, became popular with the Śāktas, and it was further elaborated in the later Purāṇas.

The Mātṛkās or Divine Mothers play a very important role in the Devī legends. In the *Mahābhārata* we come across numerous Mātṛkās associated with Skanda,[1] and they had also access in Jainism and other religious systems. In the Purāṇas, they are regarded as the offshoots of the goddess Kauśikī or Caṇḍikā, some of them like Vaiṣṇavī, Kālikā, etc. often identified with the Devī herself. There are different versions of the origin of the Mātṛkās in the Purāṇas. (I) When Śiva's spear pierced the heart of the demon Andhaka, each drop of the latter's blood created a demon. This enraged Śiva and from his body emerged the goddess Yogeśvari, and at the same time Vaiṣṇavī, Brahmāṇī Kaumārī, Indrāṇī, Māheśvari, Cāmuṇḍā and Vārāhī appeared from the bodies of Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Kumāra, Indra, Maheśvara, Yama and Varāha respectively. They drank and drained all the blood that fell from Andhaka's body and the purpose of the gods was served. (II) When the Asura Śumbha sent Raktabīja to fight against the Devi, the latter uttered a fearful war-cry when Brahmāṅi, Māheśvarī, Vaiṣṇavī, Kaumārī, Vārāhī and Nārasiṃhī emerged out of her mouth. The seventh, viz. Caṇḍamārī or Cāmuṇḍā had already sprung from the Devī's body when the latter was engaged in war with Ruru, a general of Śumbha, and each drop of blood that fell from the body of Raktabīja was drunk by Cāmuṇḍā alone.[2]

The *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*[3] refers to the worship of the Divine Mothers by the *Mātṛ-maṇḍala-vidaḥ* or *maṇḍala-Krama-vidaḥ*. The first means 'those who know fully the circle

[1] VIII. 46.
[2] *Matsya*, CLXXIX, *Devī M*, VIII. 12-21.
[3] LX. 19.

of the 'Divine Mothers'. As to the second, the word *krama* means 'custom or rule sanctioned by tradition'. The word *maṇḍala* has different meanings—'the magic circle', 'group' etc. A passage, *Mātṛnām loka-mātṛnāṃ maṇḍalam*, occurs in a sixth century inscription from Udaygiri in Jhansi district, U.P. It records the construction of a temple of the Divine Mothers. The *Mātṛmaṇḍala* referred to in this inscription recalls the *Mātṛ-gaṇā* or the 'group of Divine Mothers' mentioned in the records of the Early Kadamba kings.[1] These rulers claimed to have been favoured by Kārttikeya and the Divine Mothers. The Early Cālukyas of Badami are stated to have nourished by the Seven Mothers described as *Sapta-loka-mātṛ*[2], often interpreted as 'the Seven Mothers of Mankind' though its real meaning seems to be 'the Mothers of the Seven Worlds'.[3] The reference in all these cases seem to be the collective worship of the Divine Mothers regarded as seven in number and probably known as the Circle of Seven.

It seems therefore that in different parts of the country, at least in the age of the Guptas, the Great goddess was worshipped in her individual aspects as well as collectively in a Circle of Seven. The Bihar Stone Pillar inscription of Skandagupta mentions the Divine Mothers, the *Mātṛs*.[4] We have already occasion to refer to the Gangadhar stone inscription of Viṣvavarman[5] which refers to the temple of Divine Mothers as the terrible abode full of Dākinīs or female ghouls and the goddesses themselves are represented as uttering loud and tremendous shouts of joy and stirring up the very oceans with the winds rising from the *tantra* or magical rites. The Deogarh rock inscription of about the sixth century AD refers to another early temple of the Divine Mothers.[6] The Aulikara inscription of 423 AD records the construction and consecration of a temple of the Divine Mothers.[7]

Gaurī is mentioned in the Sarnath Stone inscription of Pra-

1 *IA*, VI. 27.
2 *Ibid*, VII. 74. 164; XIII. 138.
3 *cf.* Sircar, *SS*, 239-40.
4 *CII*. III. 49.
5 *Ibid*, 78.
6 *EI*, XVIII, 126 ff.
7 Sircar, *SI*, 284 ff.

Prakaṭāditya[1] while the Mandasore Stone Pillar inscription of Yaśodharman[2] records Kṣitidharatanayā which evidently refers to Umā or Pārvatī. The Khoh Copper plate inscription of Saṃkṣobha[3] states that at the request of a certain person named Coḍugomin of the village of Opani, the king installed a temple for the goddess Piṣṭapurī and made an endowment for its maintenance. This goddess also occurs in two copper plates of Sarvanātha.[4] The Nāgarjuni Hill Cave inscription of the Maukhari chief Anantavarman records the installation in the cave of an image representing Śiva in the form of Bhūtapati and his wife Pārvatī under the name of Devī. Another Nagarjuni Hill Cave inscription of the same king refers to the installation of an image of the goddess Pārvatī, under the name of Kātyāyanī, and also the grant of a village to the same goddess under the name of Bhavānī. This inscription also stresses upon the Mahiṣamardinī form of the goddess.[5] A stanza in adoration of the same form of the goddess is found at the beginning of an inscription from the Bhramaramātā temple near Choti Sadri not far from the Neemuch station on the Ajmer-Khandwa railway line.[6] The epigraph records the construction and consecration a temple of the Devī in 491 AD. The Kalahandi Copper Plate grant of Tusṭikera[7] (5th or 6th century AD) refers to the cults of Stambheśvarī, the family-goddess of the Śulkis.

It is difficult to identify the goddess depicted on the Gupta coins.[8] More suggestive are the numerous terracotta seals, mostly belonging to the early and late Gupta period. Durgā and Śiva are depicted on a few seals from Bhita.[9] The same site yields the seals of Sivamagha and Bhīmasena in which a female figure, probably Durgā, appears by the side of a bull. The goddess facing a lion found on many seals hailing from Bhita and

[1] *CII*, III, 286.
[2] *Ibid*, 142, 150; *IA*, XVIII, 219; XX, 188.
[3] *CII*, III, 112.
[4] *Ibid*, 132, 138.
[5] *Ibid*, 225-28.
[6] *EI*, XXX, 120ff.
[7] *Ibid*, 274-78; *JKHRS*, II, 107-10.
[8] See Altekar, *CIC*, IV, 31.
[9] *ASIAR*, 1911-12, 51.

Basarh can only be explained in terms of the goddess Durgā. Several Rajghat seals bear on them interesting figures of a goddess. An oval seal of sun-burnt clay bears a two-armed goddess, and the name of the deity, written below in Gupta characters, is Durggaḥ (Durgā).

Some of the finest sculptures of the Gupta and later periods, as we have seen above, represent Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Buddhist and Jain goddesses. Images of popular river goddess like Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sarasvati, etc., are also met with.[1] But it was the Mahiṣamardini form that became most popular. A very important Gupta image is found in a relief carved on the facade of a cave at Udayagiri near Bhilsa, Madhya Pradesh, which shows the goddess killing Mahiṣāsura, the buffalo-demon. Here the goddess is twelve-armed, and the sculpture can be referred to the beginning of the fifth century AD. A terracotta plaque of Mahiṣamardini from Bhadrakālī in the Ganganagar district of Rajasthan, belonging to the early Gupta period, shows the Devi in the act of killing the buffalo-demon with a *triśūla* which she holds in her upper right hand. The upper left hand is broken. With the lower left hand she holds the head of the buffalo-demon. There is no shield or lion. The goddess in the act of killing rides on the buffalo-demon.[2] This plaque is now in the Bikaner Museum. In a beautiful plaque of the Amber Museum, the goddess holds a rectangular shield in her upper left hand and a *vajra* in the upper right. With her lower left hand she holds the tongue of the buffalo-demon. There is also a small lion at the foot of the goddess. In another of the same museum, the buffalo-demon is shown between the legs of the goddess who is seen pressing the horns of the buffalo.[3]

The structural temple of the goddess Durgā at Aihole was erected by the Cālukya kings who reigned between 550 and 642 AD. The Aihole relief shows the eight-armed goddess piercing the upturned neck of the buffalo-demon. The chief Cālukya monument is the series of the cave temples of Badami, the pillared balcony of which give some of the finest figures of the goddess in her different forms. The monumental relief of Mahi-

[1] Zimmer, *AIA*, I, 83.
[2] *Lalita Kalā*, No. 8, pl. XXVI, 23.
[3] See especially *Artibus Asiae*, XXI(2), 123-30.

ṣamardini in the Rameśvara cave at Ellora probably belongs to *c.* 650 AD. The same cave contains figures of Pārvatī and the Saptamātṛkā which also occur in other caves. One of the most beautiful and delightful Pallava specimen is the Mahiṣamardinī of Mamallapuram, assigned to the seventh century AD, which shows the goddess Durgā mounted on the lion, her eight hands armed with bow, sword, club, conch, axe, gong, etc., the demon represented with the head of a buffalo holding a club and a sword.

The form of Durgā standing on the severed head of a buffalo is described in the *Śilappadikāram*[1] while in the story of Sakkravāḷakkoṭṭam in the *Manimekalai* we hear a temple of Durgā. From this it appears that even in the pre-Pallava days temples for Durgā were built. Of the Pallava monuments, the Kôḍikālmaṇḍapam at Mahābalipuram and the Yāḷi-maṇḍapam at Saluvankuppam appear to be intended for Durgā as may be gleaned from the bas-relief sculptures of the dvārapālikās flanking on the shrine entrances in the case of the first and from the facade of the cave in that of the second. That the Draupadiratha was originally intended for Durgā is evident from her carved image in the hind wall of the shrine. Besides her own temples, Pallava sculptures of Durgā are found in the rock-cut caves. The Pallava Durgās do not reveal any iconographic rigidity, standing either on the severed head of a buffalo as at Singavaram, the Adivarāha and Trimūrti caves or simply on a *padmapīṭha*, as in the Varāhamaṇḍapa and in the hind wall of the shrine in the Draupadiratha.

The wide distribution of the Mahiṣamardinī sculptures, the popularity of the concept of the goddess slaying the demons, must have a clear social significance. In the beginning of this chapter we have given an outline of the social changes introduced in India during the time of the Guptas. The class division became more sharp and imposing than that of the preceding age, as is proved by the evidence of the Smṛti literature. The priestly and ruling classes, the landlords and big traders enjoyed the surplus of social productions, and those who were responsbile for this social production, on whose labour rested the class society

[1] XX. 34-35.

in which the rich became richer, the powerful became more powerful, were mostly Śūdras, divided into innumerable *jātis* following different lower occupations, for whom was reserved a miserable life of endless oppression, brutal physical torture and ever-agonising humiliation. Class society, in spite of all its ugliness, is an unavoidable historical necessity, determined by the forces and relations in the mode of production, and the final extermination of such a social system is determined by specific historical conditions evolving out of the successive qualitative changes in the system of production, which is, however, a long-drawn social process. But throughout the ages, the urge for freedom against oppression prevails which often finds expression in the forms of popular revolts. In any case, the oppressed peoples dream of their freedom and even resort to imagination, the imaginative victory of the goddess over the demons, when the reality goes against their hopes and aspirations. The Devī's fight with demons thus served as the best ideology that the ancient age could provide to the toiling masses struggling against the intolerable conditions of life, the social importance of which we ought not to minimise.

5

THE PERIOD OF ŚĀKTA EXPANSION
(AD 700-1000)

The political supremacy of Northern India, the traditional Madhyadeśa and its adjoining areas, practically came to an end with the fall of the Gupta empire on the ruins of which Harṣavardhana, Yaṣovarman and Lalitāditya could found only short-lived kingdoms. They failed in their efforts to build up a stable empire, the cause of which must economically be attributed to the collapse of the Roman trade in Northern India. The middle of the eighth century AD saw the rise of three great dynasties, the Gurjara Pratihāras in Western India, the Pālas in Eastern India and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas in the Deccan and South India. The Pratihāras derived their economic strength from the naval trade of the Arabian Sea and the Pālas from that of the Bay of Bengal while the Rāṣṭrakūṭas utilised both the seas for the same purpose. That is why the Rāṣṭrakūṭas fought successfully not only with the Pallavas and other powers of the South Indian Peninsula and advanced even as far as Rameśvaram, but at the same time they defeated the Pratihāra rulers Vatsarāja and Nāgabhaṭa and the Pāla king Dharmapāla. Rāṣṭrakūṭa Dhruva carried his victorious campaign as far as the *doab* between the Gaṅgā and the Yamunā, and his son Govinda III overran the whole country up to the Himalayas. The South thus emerged effectively in the political life of the country, as it had already emerged in its religious and cultural life.

The three powers, from three corners of the country, fought among themselves for the possession of the city of Kanauj which was raised to the dignity of an imperial capital by Harṣavardhana

and Yaśovarman, and by doing so they made unnecessary wastage of their power. There were also threats from outside. According to the chronicles of Tibet her kings exercised political domination over parts of India during the period AD 750-850. Chinese sources confirm the great military strength and the aggressive military campaigns of the Tibetans both against China and India. Although the Muslims were checked in Sindh they never gave up the idea of pushing their conquests to India. In any case, the political situation was not stable and its reflection was seen in social life which was marked by decline and decadence in all spheres of cultural activity. Literature of the period under review became less creative and more artificial. This holds good also in the case of sculpture and painting. In social life the fate of the Śūdras, various ethnic and professional groups, was intolerable. The later Smṛtis even surpass their predecessors in emphasising the social and religious disabilities of this class.

As we have pointed out in the concluding paragraph of the preceding chapter, where there is oppression there is also attempt to get rid of it. The old conception of *Śakti* acquired side by side a new significance amongst the toiling masses. The cult of *Śakti* came to denote the cult of that power which would lead to the victory of the oppressed class, which would ensure the Devī's final triumph over the demons. The sentiment that they were being oppressed was genuine and this was expressed in their non-cooperation with the ruling class during the Muslim invasions. The existence of the goddess cult among the higher section of the peoples and the ruling class, a fact supported by evidence, does not, however, go against the views we are stressing here. After all, the cult of the female principle had a very ancient tradition, the influence of which they could not avoid, but certainly there was difference in outlook and purpose behind the cult. Secondly, in many cases the upper class required active assistance of the lower, often to save their skin and property from the hands of their enemies, and the situation thus demanded at least a show of cultural identity of the two sections as a result of which some of the cults and rituals of the simpler peoples were adopted by the higher, but not in their original unsophisticated form. They were given aristocratic colour. Thirdly, the liberalizing aspects of Śāktism, its denial of

the caste-rigidity, its progressive and dignified attitude towards women which was virtually opposed to the patriarchal outlook, obviously influenced some of the top intellectuals, even belonging to the higher section of the peoples, and this gave rise to an ideological struggle, a battle of ideas which, in the long run, came in favour of Śāktism.

"The second half of the seventh and the first half of the eighth century AD," says Winterniz,[1] "was a period of lively philosophical disputes. Kumārila, the great Mīmāṃsā philosopher and representative of Brahmanical orthodoxy, attacked the Buddhist and Jinistic logicians, including among the last-named the prominent teachers Samantabhadra and Akalaṅka, whilst Prabhāçandra and Vidyānanda defended their co-religionists against Kumārila." Here Winternitz echoes a popular but fallacious sentiment. Kumārila was never a *Champion of Brahmanical Orthodoxy;* the purpose of Mīmāṃsā philosophy was different. Kumārila's attack on Buddhist and Jain philosophy was of minor importance. His main target of attack was the Nyāya Vaiśeṣika conception of God and the Vedantic conception of Brahman and Māyā. However, before dealing with the great intellectual dispute, occurring between AD 700 and 1000, we should have here a total picture of the philosophical arena.

The Sāṅkhya concept of *Prakṛti*, as we have seen in the introduction of the present work, evolved out of the primitive conception of a material Earth Mother and later became the strongest theoretical basis of Śāktism. We have also hinted that the origin of the Sāṅkhya system may be traced to a pre-Vedic non-Aryan stream which is likely to be matriarchal in nature while the other stream represented by the Vedic Aryans is decidedly patriarchal. Reference to the Sāṅkhya system are found scattered not only in the *Mahābhārata* which considers it as authoritative as the Vedas but also in the Upaniṣads, the *Caraka Saṃhitā*, the *Manusmṛti* and the *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭilya. Pre-Buddhist existence of the Sāṅkhya is indicated by the place name of Kapilavāstu, by the doctrines of Pakudha Kaccāyana who was a senior contemporary of Buddha and by Buddhaghoṣa's claim that the preceptor of Buddha was a follower of

[1] *HIL*, II, 478.

Sāṅkhya system.[1] But, in spite of numerous references to the Sāṅkhya in ancient literature, we know practically nothing of its original form, the well known *Sāṅkhykārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa which was composed between the second and the fifth centuries AD preserves only a perverted form of the original system. "The fact that Caraka (78 AD) does not refer to the Sāṅkhya as described by Īśvarakṛṣṇa and referred to in other parts of the *Mahābhārata* is a definite proof that Īśvarakṛṣṇa's Sāṅkhya is a later modification which was either non-existent in Caraka's time or was not regarded as an authoritative Sāṅkhya view."[2] The hypothesis of a non-Vedic authorship of the Sāṅkhya may be substantiated by the fact that (I) the Sāṅkhya conception of Prakṛti as the material cause of the universe is incompatible with the Vedāntic conception of Brahman, that (II) greatest care is taken in the *Brahmasūtra* to refute the Sāṅkhya, and that (III) there had always been a conscious attempt to revise the Sāṅkhya in the light of Vedānta. According to Śaṅkara, Kapila's doctrine not only contradicts the Vedas but also the sayings of those peoples like Manu who follow the Vedic way *(Kapilasya tantrasya vedaviruddhatvam vedānusārimanuvacana-viruddhatvañca)*. As regards Prakṛti, the female principle and the material cause of the world, Śaṅkara states: "It is impossible to find room in the Vedānta texts for the non-intelligent *pradhāna*, the fiction of the Sāṅkhyas; because it is not founded upon scripture."[3] It is interesting to note that in the *Brahma-sūtra*, which consists of 555 *sūtras*, 60 are employed to refute the Sāṅkhya and only 43 to deal with others. According to Śaṅkara, by the refutation of the Sāṅkhya, which is the "most dangerous adversary," the conquest of the minor enemies (other schools) is virtually accomplished.[4]

Relics of the original anti-Vedic character of the Sāṅkhya are also found even in the present form of the Sāṅkhya texts. The grounds of the Śāṅkhya objection to the validity of the Vedas are explained by Gauḍapāda quite elaborately in the *Kārikā*.[5]

[1] For textual references see my *IMG*, 109-112.
[2] Dasgupta, *HIP*, I, 218.
[3] I, i.5; *SBE*, XXXIV; 47.
[4] *SBE*, XXXIV, 318-19.
[5] See Colebrooke's *SK*, 13.

In a verse of the *Sāṅkhyasūtra*[1] it is stated that the Vedas cannot lead to the *summum bonum* because the fruits of the Vedic rituals have a beginning and therefore also an end. According to Dasgupta,[2] Śaṅkara's contention that the Sāṅkhya was non-Vedic is right, because the apparent references to Sāṅkhya in the *Kaṭha* and the *Śvetāśvatara* show that these ideas have no organic connexion with the general Upaniṣadic scheme of thought. "Originally the Sāṅkhya must have taken up a position of direct opposition to the doctrines of the Brāhmaṇas, as is proved *interalia* by its polemic against their ceremonial,"[3] says Garbe, who also holds that "the origin of the Sāṅkhya system appears in the proper light only when we understand that in those regions of India which were little influenced by Brahmanism the first attempt had been made to explain the riddles of the world and of our existence mainly by means of reason. For the Sāṅkhya philosophy is, in its essence, not only atheistic but also inimical to the Veda. All appeal to Śruti in the Sāṅkhya texts lying before us are subsequent additions. We may altogether remove the Vedic elements grafted upon the system and it will not in the least be affected thereby. The Sāṅkhya philosophy had been originally, and has remained up to the present day, in its real contents, un-Vedic and independent of Brahmanical tradition."[4]

The advocates of the Vedānta schools wanted to interpret the Śāṅkhya in terms of their own philosophical creed. There was a deliberate contamination of genuine Sāṅkhya with Upaniṣadic Vedānta and the Epic Sāṅkhya is a hybrid combination of the classical Sāṅkhya and Vedānta.[5] Vijñānabhikṣu in his introduction to the *Sāṅkhyasūtra* indicates that his real motive is to give Sāṅkhya a colour of Vedānta. That the *Sāṅkhyasūtra* is really burdened with Vedāntic elements has been demonstrated by Garbe.[6] Other commentators on the *Sāṅkhyasūtra*, Aniruddha and Mahādeva, were confirmed Vedāntists, and so was Gauḍapāda, the chief commentator on the *Sāṅkhyakārikā*, who did not

[1] I.6.
[2] *IC*, I, 79-80.
[3] *ERE*, XI, 189.
[4] *ACOPVMCSS*, XX-XXI.
[5] Belvalkar and Ranade, *HIP*, II, 414.
[6] *SPB*, XI-XII.

hesitate to transform the original doctrine of the plurality of Puruṣa into that of the non-duality of the same, without which the underhand conversion of original Sāṅkhya into disguised Vedānta could not be complete.[1]

In spite of all this, the Vedānta itself could not get rid of the expanding influence of Śāktism. Even in its Advaita form, in which Brahman is one without a second, the conception of Māyā as a female principle gradually evolved. Thus Brahman could become the creator only when he was associated with Māyā, which was subsequently called his eternal energy *(nityā śakti)*. While in the Vedāntic school of Śaṅkara it is the eternal Māyā or Śakti of Brahman that became responsbile for the origin of the world of diversity, in the theistic schools of the Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas this Māyā or Śakti, also identified with the older conception of Prakṛti, got greater personification and became identified with the wife of the supreme deity. The position of the Mīmāṃsā school was somewhat different. They rejected the conception of God absolutely[2] but, strangely enough, they adhered strictly to the Vedic ritualistic tradition. Their stark atheism on the one hand and inclination to ritualism on the other made them stand in a contradictory position, as is thought by scholars like Radhakrishnan, etc.[3] But there is no real contradiction. The nearest equivalent of the word *yajña* acceptable to the Mīmāṁsā standpoint is ritual, or more strictly magical ritual that had nothing to do with prayer, propitiation and worship. These were acts which, by their intrinsic efficacy, led to the designed results. The Mīmāṃsā as a philosophy was fundamentally nothing but the rationalisation of the standpoint of magic as opposed to religion.[4] It is very clear that philosophers of the Mīmāṃsā school resorted to the idea of the effectiveness of ancient tribal and customs as a way out of the socio-economic crisis of their own age.

In the preceding chapter we have seen that both Buddhism and Jainism recognised female deities side by side with the male Buddhas and Jinas and their emanations. Buddhas and

[1] For references see my *IMG*, 113.
[2] See my *HICI*, 66-68.
[3] Radhakrishnan, *IP*, II, 427.
[4] Chattopadhyaya, *IA*, 238 ff.

Jinas were regarded as gods, and their images were worshipped, along with those of their female consorts, in temples with devotional songs, accompanied by rites and ceremonies. From the seventh century onwards Śākta Tāntric ideas began to influence all the major religious systems of India. Jainism alone withstood this new current and largely maintained its rigid orthodoxy. Between AD 700 and 1000, one third of the population of the Deccan were in the Jain fold[1] but Jainism recieved a serious setback shortly afterwards owing to the rapid spread of the Liṅgāyata sect. In North India too, except in the west and perhaps Malwa, Jainism appears to have lost its hold during the period. In the Tamil area also Jainism faced a stage of decadence. The organised efforts to stamp out Jainism by the Śaiva Nāyanars, the conversion of Kūn Pāṇḍya by Sambandar and that of the Pallava king Mahendravarman by Appar led to the downfall of Jains in Tamil land about AD 750, as a result of which the Jains left the Pallava and Pāṇḍya kingdoms and migrated possibly to Koppaṇa, Śravaṇa Belgola and surrounding territory where they were patronised by the Gaṅga and other rulers. But it is interesting to note that the great Jain teachers and philosophers understood their declining position very quickly and adopted possible measures to overcome the crisis. Akalaṅka Haribhadra, Vidyānanda and other philosophers did their best to defend Jainism from the attacks of the rival schools. Important commentaries on the Digambara Canon were composed. Literary output was also immense, not only in Sanskrit but also in Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa as well as in regional languages, especially in Kannada language. To popularise the religion, the Jain teachers insisted on the doctrine of four gifts —learning, food, medicine and shelter. This helped a great deal in winning the allegiance and devotion of the masses. It may be noted in this connexion that the Ālvars and Nāyanārs, who led opposition against Jainism adopted the very methods of the Jains—the fourfold *dāna* in the forms of *āhāra, abhaya, bhaiṣajya* and *śāstra*—to gather followers. This orientation of religion to the primary needs of humanity was undoubted due to the awareness of the existing class conflict referred to above. The introduction of theism in Jainism should also be taken into

[1] Altekar, *RT*, 313.

account in this connexion. The Jina and his predecessors came to be looked upon as gods. The Jina is described as the Universal Spirit and identified with Śiva, Dhātṛ, Sugata and Viṣṇu.[1] Jainism of this period tried to save itself from the influence of the all-pervading Śāktism. But this attempt was not crowned with complete success. The names and iconographic features of the Śāsanadevatās, female attendants of the Jinas, distinctly indicate the Śākta association of many of them. The name and iconographic features of Ambikā or Kuṣmāṇḍīṇī, the Śāsanadevatā of Neminātha and consort of Gomedha, leave little doubt that she is a Jain adaptation of the Śākta goddess of the same name. Likewise Padmāvatī who is associated with snakes is a Jain adaptation of Manasā who is also known as Padmāvatī or Padmā. Images of Ambikā are found all over India, and her two-, four-, eight- and even twenty-armed varieties are known. She is often represented with her symbol of a bunch of mangoes and a child or sometimes two children near her with her lion mount Sometimes she is represented as seated or standing by her consort Gomedha or accompanied by the dancing Saptamātṛkās or seated underneath the spreading branches of a tree by the side of her consort with children in their laps. The cult of Jain Ambikā was especially popular in West Bengal.

Tāntric elements profoundly influenced Buddhism of this period and transformed it almost beyond recognition. While the philosophical teachings of Buddha received a new interpretation at the hands of the master-minds like Asaṅga, Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu and Āryadeva and the great logicians like Candrakīrti, Śāntideva, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, were guarding the front doors of Buddhist monasteries, Tāntricism steadily made its way into Buddhism through the backdoors. It should be pointed out in this connexion that Tāntric ideas, generally regarded as the basis of the Śākta religion, also pervaded different religious sects and radically changed their views and practices. The reason behind the ultimate triumph of Tāntricism is not easy to determine. "Tāntricism," as S.B. Dasgupta observes, "is neither Buddhist nor Hindu in origin. It seems to be a religious undercurrent, originally independent

[1] *cf. IA*, VIII, 105.

of any abstruse metaphysical speculation, flowing from an obscure point of time in the religious history of India."[1] There is reason to believe that primitive Tāntricism was a practical means to stimulate the generative powers in nature, and as such it was closely related to the Mother Goddess, the puissant and eternally active *Śakti* representing the forces of life in nature. We find a considerable degree of unity among men in different parts of the world in respect of such primitive beliefs. There are traces of Tāntric rituals in the material remains of Harappa and Mohenjodaro.[2] In later Vedic literature also we come across sex-rites associated with agriculture[3] and this stream of thought and action did not cease to exist in the subsequent ages.

As a popular religion Mahāyānism, in course of its development, had to make compromise with peoples of widely different tastes and intellectual calibre. Heterogeneous elements of faith and customs thus began to crop up in the province of Buddhism. In course of time, elements like the *mantras* and the *dhāraṅīs* were introduced in Buddhism and in the *Tattvaratnāvalī*[4] we find Mahāyānism subdivided into two schools *viz.*, Pāramitā-nāya and Mantra-nāya. This Mantra-nāya or Mantra-yāna seems to be the introductory stage of Tāntric Buddhism, from which other offshoots, like Vajrayāna, Kālacakrayāna, Sahajayāna, etc. arose in later times.

The earliest Buddhist literature which may be called precursor of Tantra was known as the *dhāraṇīs*. The growth of the *dhāraṇī* literature took place between the fourth and eighth centuries AD. The earliest works dealing with Tāntric Buddhism are the *Mañjuśrī mūlakalpa* and the *Guhyasamāja*, composed about the fifth or sixth century AD. The former deals with the *mudrās* (finger poses), *maṇḍalas* (diagrams), *mantras* (spells) *kriyās* (rites) and *caryās* (duties) and also *paṭavidhāna*, i.e. directions for drawing pictures of the Buddhist gods and goddesses. The text also furnishes us with a list of holy places which later became the chief seats of Tāntric Buddhism. The *Guhyasamāja* on the other hand is devoted to *yoga* and *Anuttarayoga* and although it contains a few directions for *mantras*

1 *ORCBBL*, 27.

2 Kosambi, *ISIH*, 54; Banerjea, *DHI*, 171; *cf. IHQ*, VII, 1-32.

3 *supra*; see also Chakravarty in *IHQ*, VI, 114 ff.

4 Collected in H.P. Sastri's *Advaya-vajra-saṃgrahā*, *GOS*, XL.

and *maṇḍalas*, it is practically the earliest text of the Vajrayāna form of Buddhism of which we shall refer to in the next chapter. The philosophy of Tāntric Buddhism as can be reconstructed from these texts may be summarised as follows : The gods and goddesses are the symbols of the Buddhist conceptions of four elements and five constituents of a being. Earth is represented by the goddess Locanā, water by Māmakī, fire by Pāṇḍaravāsinī and air by Tārā while the five constituents of a being are represented by the five Dhyānī Buddhas. Creation is due to the *Śakti* or female energy of the Adi-Buddha, and as such the adepts should realise that the female sex is the source of all. The *Guhyasamāja*, while describing the different ceremonies in connexion with initiation mentions *Prajñābhiseka* or the initiation of the adept with *Prajñā* or *Śakti.*[1] The preceptor takes the hand of Śakti, a beautifut woman, and placing it on the hand of the disciple says that, as Buddhahood is impossible of attainment by any other means, this Vidyā should be accepted and never abandoned in life. The Vidyās were women of flesh and blood and later on they were deified. The *Sammoha Tantra* gives a list of the Vidyās whose worship was current in different parts of India.[2] Some of these Vidyās are well known names of Buddhist and Brahmanical goddesses.

In the earlier *dhāraṇīs* Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is the chief object of worship. The goddess Tārā occurs in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*[3] in her various forms like Bhṛkuti, Locanā Māmakī, Śvetā, Pāṇḍaravāsinī, Sutārā, etc. She is described as Vidyārājñī who is full of compassion. Tārā is elevated to the position of the highest deity in the *Mahāpratyaṅgirādhāraṇī*, a fragment of which is found in Central Asia, in which she is described as a goddess of white colour wearing a garland of *vajras* and having the figure of Vairocana on her crown. From the seventh century onwards we find the exuberance of Tārā-stotras (*cf.* the *Sarangdharā-stotra* composed in praise of Tārā by the eighth century Kashmirian poet Sarvajñamitra) and the goddess is raised to the mothership of all Buddhas. It was from this time that her cult became popular in Tibet and China of which

[1] *GOS*, 161.
[2] Bagchi, *ST*, 100-101.
[3] 508, 647-48.

we had the occasion to refer to in the preceding chapter.

According to the *Sammoha Tantra*, Nīlasarasvatī or Ugratārā was born in a lake called *Cola* on the western side of the Meru which was included in the Cīnadesa. P.C. Bagchi[1] suggests that *cola* is connected with *kul*, *kol*, the common word for 'lake', which is found with names of so many lakes to the west of T-ien-shan. In China, Tārā became merged with the pre-Buddhist Mother Goddess Si-Wang-Mu, the representative of *yin* or the female principle. The two streams, thus assimilated, produced a new form of Tārā and a new set of rituals called *cīnācāra*, and these were recovered from China by the Indians. The *Tārārahasya*, *Rudrayāmala*, *Mahācīnācārakrama*, etc. categorically hold that the Vāmācāra practices, connected with the worship of the goddess Tārā, were brought from China by the sage Vasiṣṭha who was instructed by the Buddha himself. According to the legend, Vasiṣṭha actually performed the Tārā ritual at the shrine of Kāmākhyā, but failing to obtain his objective he was angry and frustrated, when the goddess herself manifested before him and asked him to go to Mahācīna which he did accordingly.

The Cult of Tārā and her various forms was strong in Eastern India. Mahācīna-Tārā, also known in the Buddhist Tantras as Ugratārā, has been incorporated in the Śākta pantheon under the name Tārā, and is now regarded as one of the ten Mahāvidyās. She is described in the *sādhanās* as of terrific appearance, four-armed, standing in the *pratyālīḍhā* pose on a corpse, and holding a sword, a chopper, a lotus and a skull in her hands and a miniature figure of Akṣobhya within the crown of chignon *(ekajaṭa)* on her head. The iconographic trait of *ekajaṭā* of Tārā gave rise to the conception of the goddess Ekajaṭā, and the cult of this new goddess became popular in Bhoṭa (Tibet). According to tradition Ārya Nāgārjuna recovered the Ekajaṭā cult from Bhoṭa. We come across five varieties of Tārā, classified according to colour,—green, white, yellow, blue and red.[2] In north and east of India images of Khādiravanī Tārā, also known as Śyāma Tārā who is an emanation of Amoghasiddhi, are found in abundance, though they belong to subsequent age.

[1] *ST*, 43-44.
[2] Getty, *GNB*, 122ff.

Another variety of Tārā, described several times in the *Sādhanamālā*, is the Vajra-Tārā who is simultaneously an emanation of the groups of five or four Dhyanī-Buddhas. Her *maṇḍala* consists of several encircling attendant deities.[1]

Of other Buddhist goddesses, Parṇaśabari is of great iconographic interest. Two extant images of this goddess found in East Bengal closely follow the textual description.[2] The *sādhanās* describe her as three-faced and six-armed, standing in *pratyāliḍha* pose and clad in leaf garments. Her very name associates her with the Parṇa-śabaras of the *Bṛhatsaṃhitā*, the leaf-clad aboriginal tribes. Vasudhārā, the consort of Jambhala, is the Buddhist counterpart of the Brahmanical Vasundharā, Pṛthivī or Bhūdevī, the consort of Viṣṇu. Nairātmā, one of whose images is preserved in the Indian Museum, resembles the Śākta Kālī. She is shown dancing on a corpse, holding a short sword and a skull cup in her two hands.[3] Several images of Mārīcī have been found in eastern and northern India who is usually depicted as three-faced and eight-armed and attended by four goddesses Varttālī, Vadālī, Varālī and Varāhamukhī.[4] Special mention should be made in this connexion to the eight-armed Mārīcī, now in the Lucknow Museum, which was originally found at Sarnath. Mārīcī is invoked by the Lamas of Tibet about the time sunrise. Of other Mahāyāna Buddhist goddess Vajravārāhi, Prajñāpāramitā, etc. are specially important from iconographic point of view. The Buddhist Vajrayoginī reminds us of the Śākta-Tāntric goddess Chinnamastā. Vajravetālī of the Buddhist Tantras reminds us of Vetāla Devī mentioned in Subandhu's *Vāsavadattā*. In the *Devīmāhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* we come across such goddesses as Māyūrī, Aparājitā, Vārāhī, Bhīmā, Kapālinī, Kauberī, etc. These goddesses also occur in the *Sādhanamālā*. The presiding deities of the Śākta *Saṭcakra*, like Dākini. Hākinī, Lakinī, Rākini, Śākinī, etc., own their origin to the Buddhist conceptions. The cult of Jaṅgulī finds its Hindu counterpart in that of Manasā and Viṣahari.

1 Bhattasali, *IBBSDM*, 45-53, XV-XVII.
2 Banerji, *EISMS*, pl. XXXIX.
3 Bhattacharyya, *IBI* (1924), 90-92.
4 *Ibid*, 97.

Tāntric manuscripts of seventh to ninth century have been found in Nepal. Buddhist Tantras were translated into Chinese in the eighth and into Tibetan in the ninth century AD. A Cambodian inscription refers to the fact that the Tāntric texts were introduced there from India at the beginning of the ninth century AD.[1] As regards the Tāntric practices, the *Guhyasamāja* and a few other early texts refer to meat-eating, union with females, and finger poses. It is generally held that some Taoist ideas and practices, especially the *vāmācāra* (also known as *cīnācāra)* rites came to India from China. Referring to the Chinese ideas about erotics and erotic practices, K.H. Van Gulik observes: "this (sexual) practice, again, has been the starting point of a secret Tāntric-Taoistic ritual intended not only to increase the length of life, but even to win immortality for the adepts ....This ritual sheds a most significant light on certain obscure doctrines and practices of Indian and Tibetan mysticism, especially of Yoga, the Buddhist-Tāntric Siddhācāryas and the Vāmācāra Śāktas."[2] Further light on this *cīnācāra* has been thrown by Joseph Needham whose final conclusion is that although Tāntricism at the first sight seems to have been an Indian export to China, a closer inspection leads to the conclusion that the whole thing was really Taoist.[3]

But my conclusion is different. Interchange of ideas between Taoism and Tāntricism might have taken place at their advanced stage of development, but at the initial stage they developed independently. Sexual rites are related to fertility magic, common to all forms of primitive religion, as Frazer and Briffault have wonderfully demonstrated. Erotic practices associated with the goddess cult are older than the Tāntric and Taoist texts themselves. This also holds good in the case of the rites of wine and fish. Thanks to the researches of Briffault, we can now easily connect the use of wine as a precondition of sexual intercourse with fertility magic. Fish is also closely associated with matriarchal beliefs as a fertility symbol.[4] Aphrodite, the fish-goddess "was worshipped as the bestower of all animal and vegetative fruit-

1 Majumdar, *IK*, 362 ff.

2 See Goetz in *ABORI*, XXXVI, 133-49.

3 Needham, *SCC*, II, 425 ff.

4 Dikshit, *MG*, 30-36.

fulness, and under this aspect especially as a goddess of women."[1] The relation between fish and Mother Goddess is a very common feature of primitive religion.[2] Wilson[3] and Mackenzie[4] inform us that geometrical patterns, like the Tāntric diagrams representing the female genitalia, were also well known in the Mesopotamian and Aegean world, and their appearances on the persons of certain goddesses like, Artemis, Hera, Demeter, Astarte, and the Chaldean Nana, suggests that these signs were employed as fecundity symbols.

The primitive basis of the Tāntric *Pañca-makāra* or *Pañcatattva*—the use of *madya* (wine), *māṃsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudrā* (diagrams) and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse)—can thus be established on further investigations. This primitive undercurrent of ideas and practices profoundly influenced not only Buddhism but other religious systems as well. Many of the Vaiṣṇava Saṃhitās and Śaiva Āgamas are full of Tāntric elements. The Vaiṣṇava Saṃhitās and Śaiva Āgamas agree on one point, namely, that a female principle representing *śakti* or energy must be associated with the ultimate reality, Viṣṇu or Śiva, and this *śakti* is not only the cause of manifestation, but is also responsible for differentiation of worldly objects including the finite individuals. The universe comes into being because of the association of the male and the female, Viṣṇu and his *śakti* or Śiva and his *śakti*, and at the end of a cosmic cycle the created universe returns to its source when *śakti* comes to repose in the Lord. Vaiṣṇava teachers of this age, like Nāthamuni of Śrīraṅgam, wanted to base the religion upon the doctrine of Vedānta. In the earlier stages of this process the *māyā* element as the female principle and as the *śakti* of Brahman did not get much importance, but later it became a potent factor, the religious implication of which culminated in the conception of Rādhā.

In Vaiṣṇava sculpture of this age, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī and Bhūdevī, associated with Viṣṇu, were still the most represented ones. The Gajalakṣmī motif was also prevalent. Reference to one eleventh century bronze figure of four-armed Gajalakṣmī,

[1] Seffert, *DCA*, 38f.
[2] Mackenzie, *CPHE*, 237.
[3] *S*, 771 ff.
[4] *MS*, 2ff.

hailing from North Bengal, may be made in this connexion. Independent figures of Sarasvatī were also common. While Vaiṣṇavite sculptures of this age were following the old traditional line, the Śaivite ones were marked by new innovations. It was due to the deep-rooted Śākta-Tāntric influence upon Śaivism which enhanced its prestige and position as a popular religion. Some of the famous cave temples of India were dedicated to Śiva. The marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, the peaceful householder's life of Śiva with Pārvatī and her children, Purānic episodes related to Śiva, etc. became the popular theme of sculpture of this period. Sculptures representing the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, usually described as *Kalyānasundara-mūrti*, are common in several parts of India, one of the most outstanding examples of which is the Elephanta relief. The numerous Śiva figures hailing from different parts of India, illustrative of various Śiva mythologies, are divided into two groups—gracious *(saumya)* and destructive *(ugra)*. Among the different types of the terrific or *ugra* forms of Śiva mention may be made of his Bhairava, Aghora, Vīrabhadra and Virupākṣa forms. The Āgamic texts describe as many as sixty-four Bhairavas, divided into groups of eight, and they are the consorts of sixty-four *Yoginīs* referred to in the Tāntric form of Śakti worship.

In Kashmir we get two schools of Śaivism, the Spanda and the Pratyabhijñā. The former was founded about the ninth century by Vasugupta to whom Śiva is said to have revealed the *sūtras*. His disciple Kallaṭa wrote *Spandasarvasva* in which he explained the meaning of the *Śiva-sūtras* as taught by his master. The important works of the Pratyabhijñā school are the *Śivadṛṣṭi* and the *Pratyabhijñā-sūtra* composed by Somānanda and his pupil Utpala respectively in the beginning of the tenth century AD. The *Pratyabhijñāvimarśiṇī* of Abhinavagupta is a commentary upon the *Pratyabhijñā-sūtra*. Abhinavagupta has also given us two more works of this school, the *Tantrāloka* and the *Paramārthasāra*. The Kashmir Śaivism had based its doctrines on the Vedānta system with emphasis upon the *māyā* element regarded as the *Śakti* of Brahman (Śiva). This *Śakti* mainly divided into five categories,—*cit* (the power of intelligence) *ānanda* (the power of bliss), *icchā* (the power of will), *jñāna* (the power of knowledge) and *kriyā* (the power of action)—is not different from Śiva and is spoken of as his feminine aspect. With the opening out of

Śakti, the universe appears and with her closing it disappears.

Now we shall deal with the independent development of Śāktism during the period under review. We have seen that the new religious sentiments of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism were directed to an ultimate reality united with his *Śakti* conceived as a female principle. It was an indirect triumph of Śāktism. That there had been a keen rivalry among the existing creeds can easily be made out from the Saṃhitā, Āgama and Tantra literature of the time, and this struggle helped Śāktism immensely to consolidate its position. The *Devī-śataka* of Anandavardhana of Kashmir testifies the popularity of the Devī cult in the land of the Śaivas. In South India Śāktism received an impetus from Śaṅkarācārya. He was not a Śākta in the sectarian sense. In his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtra* he gave a stout theoretical opposition to the Śākta tendencies of the doctrine of *māyā*. He had also ruthlessly criticised the Sāṇkhya conception of Prakṛti as the material cause of the universe. Despite all this, it is interesting to note that he had a soft corner for Śākta religion, perhaps due to its popularity among the masses, and was in all probability the author of the *Saundaryalaharī* the well known ode to the goddess.

With the decline of the Pallava hegemony and the rise of the Cola empire under Vijayālaya (850-870 AD), the cult of Durgā entered a new phase in South India. The Tiruvalangadu Plates of Rājendra Cola[1] says that Vijayālaya built a temple of Niśumbhamardinī at Tanjore, and this aspect of Durgā appears to have been popular during the early Cola period. This representation is found even in miniature bas-reliefs of the temples of Punjai, Pullamangai and Tirukkarugavur, all in the Tanjore district. The early Cola Durgās are eight-armed in the Pallava fashion, but one belonging to the Nāgeśvarasvāmī temple of Kumbhakonam is found four-armed. The hands of Durgā could be two, four, six or eight, or even ten or twelve at a later time. The goddess is represented in Bengal sculpture with sixteen, eighteen, twenty and even thirty-two hands. Reference may be made in this connexion to a twenty-armed image from Sirala in the Rajsahi district belonging to the tenth century which is

[1] *SII*, III, No. 205.

now lost. A peculiar iconographic attribute of Durgā in Tamil land is her association with a stag which reminds us of Artemis and also the figures in the Kuninda coins. Some of the literary descriptions like *Pāykalaippāvai* and *Kalaippariurdi* show that darting deer was her mount. Self-mutilation was probably a feature of the worship of the goddess during the Pallava and early Cola period, as is evident from several Pallava panels where the devotee is shown to offer his own head. This custom might have some bearing on the later conception of Chinnamastā. A late Pallava inscription upon a slab refers to a warrior who had offered his own head to the goddess, and the slab itself contains a relief of that act.[1]

As we have seen above, the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*, while dealing with the exploits of the Śākta Devī, describes the Mahiṣamardinī episode in addition to some other accounts of the achievements of the goddess as also the promise of her periodic appearance whenever the demons would threaten the peace of gods. The Mahiṣamardinī theme was elaborated in later Purāṇas.[2] Other achievements of the Devī, like her slaying the demons Śumbha and Niśumbha,[3] Vetra and Rudra,[4] are described in the Pūrāṇas. It is generally believed that it was one goddess who in her different forms and manifestations killed all these demons, but the fact is that they were different goddesses later identified with the Supreme Being of the Śāktas. Numerous eight or ten-armed images of Mahiṣamardini have been discovered in different parts of Eastern India. An image which should be specially mentioned in this connexion comes from a North Bengal village in the Dinajpur district portraying in a very interesting manner the nine Durgās (Navadurgā) with eighteen-armed Mahiṣamardinī as the central figure and with eight other sixteen-armed miniature figures of the same type grouped round it. Another interesting specimen is a stone image of the thirty-two-armed Devī engaged in combat with demons. This also comes from the same district.[5] Mahiṣamardinī also became popular in Rajas-

[1] *Ibid*, XII, No. 106

[2] *cf. Skanda*, Arṇūācala, Pūrva XI; Uttara XIX; Setu VI-VII; Nāgara CXX-CXXI. *Vāmana*, XVII-XX; *Varāha*, XCII-XCV.

[3] *Vāmana*, LV-LVI; *Śiva*, Vāyavīya, XXI.

[4] *Varāha*, XXVIII, XCVI.

[5] Majumdar (ed), *HB*, I, 453-54.

than and we have already referred to some early specimens. The exterior of the main sanctum of the Ambikā temple at Jagat, about 34 miles from Udaipur (10th century AD) is studded with elegant sculptures of the eight-armed Mahiṣamardinī. The three niches on the three sides of the temple depicts Mahiṣamardinī in three different styles which is an exceptional feature.[1] The temple sculptures of Osian, Abaneri and Paranagar are also fine specimens of Durgā as Mahiṣamardinī.

The Purāṇas are also responsbile for popularising the cult of the Mothers, generally seven in number, who are the energies of different major gods and described as assisting the great Śākta Devī in her fight with the demons. In the Saptamātṛkā slabs they appear from left to right, with occasional variations here and there, in the following order—Brahmāṇī or Sarasvatī, Maheśvarī or Raudrī, Kaumārī or Karttikeyānī, Vaiṣṇavī or Lakṣmī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī or Māhendrī, and Cāmuṇḍā. Nārasiṃhī replacing Cāmuṇḍā, or Yamī replacing Vārāhī is not unknown. To the list is sometimes added Mahālakṣmī or Yogeśvarī, and sometimes Caṇḍikā herself, to make the eight. The *Vārāha Purāṇa*[2] says that Yogīśvarī is the symbol of lust, Māheśvarī of anger, Vaiṣṇavī of greed, Kaumārī of attachment, Brahmāṇī of pride, Aindrī of jealousy, Cāmuṇḍā of depravity and Vārāhī of envy. According to their iconographic descriptions, Brahmāṇī is four-armed and four-headed, seated on a swan, bearing a rosary and a water-pot from which she sprinkles water with *kuśa;* Māheśvarī is seated on a bull wearing a *jaṭāmukuṭa* (locked hair dressed in a pyramidal form) and a crescent; Kaumārī is red-coloured and four-armed, carrying a *śakti* and seated on a peacock; she looks like Kumāra, decked with red robe, necklace and *keyura*, armed with *śūla* and *śakti* and surrounded by fowls; Vaiṣṇavī resembles Viṣṇu while Vārāhī a boar; her vehicle is buffalo and she is armed with a club and a wheel; Indrānī or Aindrī is many-eyed, and she carries a thunderbolt, a spear and a club; her complexion is golden and her vehicle is elephant; Cāmuṇḍā is three-eyed, fleshless and bony; she is clad in tiger-skin and seated on a corpse.[3]

[1] *Arts Asiatiqa*, 1964, 44-65; *VIJ*, I, 136.

[2] XVII.33-37.

[3] *Matsya*, CCLXI, 24-32; *Agni*, L. 19-24; *Vāmana*, LVI; *Varāha*, XCVI; etc.

The Saptamātṛkā figures are flanked on the left by Śiva or Skanda and on the right by Gaṇeśa. The growing importance of Śāktism brought them into greater prominence and distributed their cult far and wide. The colossi of the Eight Mothers from Muktimaṇḍapa near Jajpur and the Eight Mothers with Śivadūtī on the bank of the Vaitaranī indicate their popularity in the Orissa region. At present we have two sets of Mātṛkās at Jajpur. The one referred to above is the first set while of the second two colossal figures of Vārāhī and Indrāṇī survive. An inscribed image of Cāmuṇḍā also comes from Jajpur which was installed by queen Vatsadevī, probably of the Bhaumakara dynasty.[1] The Parasurāmeśvara temple of Bhubaneswara contains a group of Saptamātṛkā carved in relief on the north-west corner of the northern wall of the *Jagamohana*. The Vaitāla temple contains a terrific Cāmuṇḍā as its presiding deity and on the inner dark walls of its *Jagamohana* we find a group of Seven Mothers, all of them sitting in *Yogāsana* pose on full-blown lotus with their different attributes. In the Mukteśvar temple the presentation of Seven Mothers occurs on an eight-petalled lotus carved on the ceiling of its *Jagamohana*. In Bengal some of the Mothers have been separately sculptured and Cāmuṇḍā of various forms, such as Rūpavidyā, Siddhayogeśvarī and Danturā, has found independent representation. An image of the last-mentioned aspect of Cāmuṇḍā, showing a two-armed goddess sitting on her haunches, found originally in a Burdwan village strikingly portrays the weired and uncanny "with its bare canine teeth, rounded eyes, ghastly smile, emaciated body, lean and pendulous breasts, sunken belly and peculiar sitting posture."[2] It is now in the collection of the Vaṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣat Museum, Calcutta. Several other figures of Danturā have been found in North Bengal. The goddess Vaiṣṇavī is sometimes replaced by Vāgisvarī whose figure in octo-alloy, with eight hands, is now in the Rajsahi Museum. Another inscribed four-handed image of Vagīśvarī of AD 940 comes from Nālandā. In Rajasthan, Cāmuṇḍā is worshipped at Jodhpur, Jaswantpur, Bhinamal, Ajmer and other places, and a large number of Mātṛkā images found at Mandor, Nagda, Chitor-

[1] *EI*, XXVIII, 184-85.
[2] Majumdar (ed), *HB*, I, 455.

garh, Ramgarh, Kekinda, Phalodi, Osian and other places bear testimony to the popularity of her cult. Specially important is the group of Eight Mothers of Mandor. They are carved out of a single rock which carries an inscription of VS 742. Beginning from Gaṇeśa at the left, the Mothers have two and four hands alternately. Another group of Eight Mothers is found on the shrine door of the Nīlakaṇṭha Mahādeva temple of Kekinda which is modern Jasnagar near Merta city. The temple belongs to the tenth century AD where the Mothers are shown with children in their laps, a feature which is common also to some Mātṛkā seulptures of Orissa. To emphasise the mother-aspect, these goddesses are sometimes shown as carrying a suckling baby on their laps, and the Ellora Saptamātṛkā panel is a striking example of this type of Mātṛkā images. The Seven Mothers were favourite deities of the early Cālukyas and their cult spread in Tamil land about the beginning of the eighth century AD.[1] The first sculptural representation of the Mātṛkās is found, in the Kailāsanātha temple of Kānchipuram, and subsequently their sculptures are noticed in the Paṇḍya and Muttaraiya cave temples at Tirugokarnam, Malaiyadippatti, Kunnattur and Tirukkalakkudi. An inscription of Coḷa Rājakeśarī states that during the reign of the Pallava king Dantivarman, a temple of Saptamātṛkā was built at Alambakkam in the Tiruchirapalli District.[2] In an inscription of Pārthivendravarman reference is made to a temple of Mātṛkās at Velacheri in the Chingleput district.[3] From the ninth century onwards it became an established fashion to construct small shrines of the Mātṛkās in the temple enclosures.

The primitive *Yoginī* cult was also revived on account of the increasing influence of the cult of the Seven or Eight Mothers. Originally the *Yoginīs* were probably human beings, women of flesh and blood, priestesses who were supposed to be possessed by the goddess, and later they were raised to the status of divinities. By the usual process of multiplication their number increased from eight to sixteen and then to sixty-four or more. In Sanskrit literature the *Yoginīs* have been represented as the attendants or various manifestations of Durgā engaged in fight-

[1] *JMU*, XXXII, 154-56.
[2] *ARSIE*, 1009, No. 795.
[3] *Ibid*, 1911, No. 316; *SII*, III, No. 191.

ing with Śumbha and Niśumbha and the principal *Yoginīs* are identified with the Mātṛkās. The Orissan village Hirapur contains a temple of sixty-four *Yoginīs*. In the inner face of the circular wall of the enclosure, there are sixty niches each containing an image of *Yoginī*. All of them are in standing postures. Orissa has also another temple of sixty-four *Yoginīs* at Ranipur Jharial in the Balangir district.[1] In the sixty-four *Yoginī* temple at Bheraghat near Jubbulpore are found not only the sixty-four *Yoginīs* but also the eight Śaktis, three rivers, four other goddesses, Śiva and Gaṇeśa, thus making a total of eighty-one figures. The Bheraghat figures are damaged, but most of them fortunately retain their names inscribed in the sixty-five peripheral chapels. The names are not canonical and are evidently adopted from popular cults. The presence of Śrī-Teramvā, a Mahiṣamardinī figure with sixteen hands and of Sarvatomukhī with a lotus under-seat containing Tāntric emblems in the Bheraghat icons is interesting. At Khajuraho, the sixty-four *Yoginīs* appear in an oblong temple.

A four-armed standing figure of the goddess of the *saumya* type, found in one of the rock-cut shrines of Ellora, exactly corresponds to the description of Pārvatī. She holds in her hands a rosary, a Śivaliṅga, a miniature figure of Gaṇapati and a water-vessel. But although in the caves of Ellora and Elephanta separate shrines of Pārvatī are noticed, such a provision was absent in the Pallava and early Cola temples. However, reference to such a shrine is met with in the Eṇṇāyiram inscription of Rājendra.[2] A new shrine of Pārvatī was added to the Bṛhadīśvara temple of Tanjore at a later date. Separate images of the Devī of the *āsana* variety are comparatively rare. Several seated images have been discovered in Bengal, and a few of them can be called Aparājitā, Mahālakṣmī, etc. on the basis of various iconographic texts.

With the popularity of Śāktism exaggerated emphasis was laid upon the diverse modes of divine manifestation. One goddess thus began to be conceived as many and came to be known under different names. The Purāṇas enumerate 108 names and holy resorts of the great goddess. Some of these names were

[1] *OHRJ*, III, 55-75.
[2] *ASIAR*, 1917, No. 335.

mythical but many of them indicate local goddesses later identified with the supreme being of the Śāktas. One set of nine names of Durgā-Śailaputri, Brahmacāriṇī, Caṇḍaghaṇṭā, Kuṣmāṇḍā, Skandamātā, Kātyāyani, Kālarātri, Mahāgaurī and Siddhidātrī —practically sketches her career and functions. Another better known set is composed of Ugracaṇḍā, Pracaṇḍā, Caṇḍogrā, Caṇḍanāyikā, Caṇḍā, Caṇḍāvatī, Caṇḍarūpā, Aticaṇḍikā and Rudracaṇḍā—all signifying the wrathful aspect of the goddess. Pārvatī was differentiated into Durgā, Cāmuṇḍā Mahiṣāsuramardinī and Mahālakṣhmī while Cāmuṇḍā into Karālī and Bhadrakālī, Kalabhadarā and Mahākālī. Sarasvatī and Lakṣmī, though widely worshipped as the respective patrons of learning and riches, practically remained wives of Brahmā and Viṣṇu in Brāhmanical religions. In Mahāyāna Buddhism Sarasvatī attained greater independence and evolved many forms. Likewise Lakṣmī enjoyed an independent status in Jainism. Isolated images of Lakṣmī sometimes Aṣṭa-Lakṣmī, including Gaja-Lakṣmī, corresponding to the eight Śaktis of Viṣṇu, are found here and there all over India. By the side of the major Śākta deities we have other goddesses like Jyesṭhā, the elder sister of Lakṣmī, but associated with misfortune (Alakṣmī), reference to whose temple is made in an eighth century inscription near Madura. The Tamil lexicon *Śendan Divākaram*, a work of the tenth century, mentions eight names of this goddess—Mugaḍi, Tauvai, Kālati, Mudevī, Kakkaikkoḍiyal, Kaḷudai Vāhini, Śettai and Keḍalanaṅgu. A few of her images are found in different parts of South India. With the development of the cult of Śakti, there was a conscious attempt to erect her separate shrines near the main sanctum, and this had become a regular feature of the South Indian temple complex. These shrines were known as *Tirumuṟṟam* and the deities associated with them consisted of different varieties of Durgā, as is evident from the Cola inscriptions.[1]

A complete list of the 108 names of the great goddess with the specification of her association with particular holy places is probably to be found for the first time in the *Matsya Purāṇa*.[2] The same text has been quoted in the description of

[1] *ARSIE*, 1919, No. 207; *SII*, II, Nos. 79,81.
[2] XIII. 26-53.

the various manifestations of Bhadrakarṇikā (a form of the goddess) in the *Skanda Purāṇa*[1] as well as in the enumeration of the goddess Sāvitrī in the *Padma Purāṇa*.[2] The same text is also quoted in the *Devībhāgavata*[3] which refers to the holy places, associated with the different manifestation of the goddess, as *pīṭhas*. In the *Kūrma Purāṇa*,[4] the Devī is invoked under more than 1,000 names. Local variations, elaborations and fusions undoubtedly had characterised the evolution of these new names and forms of the goddess. Reinforcement to the Śakti cult also came from the contemporaneous Buddhist revival in which Tārā played a very prominent part, as we have seen above. In the Tantras many of the Buddhist female deities were identified with Śākta goddesses. The most outstanding Śākta upheaval was furnished by the Tantras which necessitated an understanding and an acceptance of the female principle in religious worship.

Perhaps no religious literature has raised so much controversy in evaluation as the Tantras, and hence we should say a few words regarding the practical side of the Tāntric cult of the goddess which lays special emphasis upon the *mantras* (prayers and formulae), *bījas* (syllables of esoteric significance), *yantras* (diagrams), *mudrās* (special positions of fingers) and *nyāsas* (feeling the deities in different parts of the body). The aim of the Śākta worshipper is to realise the universe within himself and to become one with the goddess. The successive steps of the spiritual ladder are constituted by three stages *paśu* (animal), *vīra* (heroic) and *divya* (divine). In the first stage, the aspirant can worship any sectarian god, but he must follow all the rules of social morality, and by doing so he would be raised to the second or the heroic level. In this stage the aspirant is able to get himself initiated in *vāmācāra* and *siddhāntācāra*. For the correct understanding of the mystic rites he requires proper training from a *guru* or preceptor. He has to disregard the social conventions about sexual purity, defy taboos about food and drink, look upon all women as manifestations of Śakti. The rituals of *pañcamakāra*—wine, fish, meat, diagrams and coitus—

[1] Āvantya/Revā, XCVIII, 64-92.
[2] Sṛṣṭi XVII, 184-211.
[3] VII. 30.55-83.
[4] I. 12.

performed in proper ways under the spiritual guidance of the *guru* elevates the aspirant to the *divya* or divine standard, and in this stage he is free to get himself initiated in the *Kaulācāra*. The Kaula worshipper of Śakti is above all moral judgments, free from all worldly attachments. The logic of Tantra is in itself very simple. What appears to be complicated is the technical and esoteric aspects of the rituals. In its social sphere the Tantra is free from all sorts of caste and patriarchal prejudices. All women are regarded as manifestations of Prakṛti or Śakti, and hence they are object of respect and devotion. Whoever offends them incurs the wrath of the great goddess. Every aspirant has to realise the latent female principle within himself, and only by becoming female he is entitled to worship the supreme being *(vāmā bhūtvā yajet param)*. A woman and even a Śūdra is entitled to function in the role of the preceptor. It is therefore obvious that such a revolutionary system is bound to be discouraged by the orthodox upholders of Brāhmanical traditions.

6

EARLY MEDIEVAL ŚĀKTISM
(From 1000-1300 AD)

The period from AD 1000 to 1300 was the period of transition that marked the end of independent Hindu rule and the beginning of the Muslim dominance in India. The triumph of Islam was mainly due to the lack of organised resistance from the Hindus. India was not united. Even individul rulers could not unite their subjects against the attack of the foreign enemies. The caste-structure of Indian society, the distinction between high and low, untouchability and social injustice were the forces contributing to the breakup of the Hindu states. The Muslims drew into their vortex a considerable number of indigenous peoples, mainly from the lower castes. However, complete Muslim conquest did not take place in India before AD 1300, and although the period under discussion was one of decline and decadence, the Hindu dynastics of India—the Paramāras, the Cahamānas, the Gahaḍavālas, the Cālukyas, the Pāṇḍyas, the Coḷas, the Calacuris, the Yādavas, the Hoysalas and a host of lesser or bigger dynasties—did their best to preserve the existing traditions. The Muslims on the other hand kept themselves severely aloof and formed a distinct unit—politically, socially and culturally. The intrusion of Islam in India introduced for the first time the generic name Hindu. Before the close of the thirteenth century AD Islam had effected permanent, though scattered settlements all over Northern India, and the country was permanently divided, from a religious and social point of view, into two distinct and conflicting entities. All the existing religious communities of India, collectively called the Hindus, had to face the disastrous effects of

the destructive inroads of Islam which were fired with the fanatic zeal for demolishing idols and temples, born of the crusading and proselytising spirit of the said religion itself.

The intrusion of Islam brought an important change in the religious outlook of India. It was responsible for the establishment of closer relation among the conflicting religious communities of India. They were united upon a common platform, and one of the principal bonds of their union was the conception of Śakti which, as 'power' or 'energy', conceived as female principle, had acquired a new significance against the background of the Muslim onslaught. Tāntric ideals associated with the cult of Śakti changed Buddhism to such a great extent that it ceased to be Buddhism at all. Belief in the efficacy of *mantra, maṇḍala* and other elements of esoteric practices was firmly established while the conception of ultimate reality as a duality of male and female principles—Upāya and Prajñā in Buddhism, Śiva and Śakti in Śaivism and Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in Vaiṣṇavism—became a common basis of philosophical understanding.

The conceptions of Sunyatā and Karuṇā of Mahayana Buddhism later developed into those of Prajñā and Upāya of Tāntric Buddhism symbolizing the female and male principles respectively. Prajñā is viewed as a goddess (Bhagavatī). The term is also used to denote *mudrā*, technically a woman to be adopted for the purpose of ritual. In some Buddhist Tantras, a beautiful girl of sixteen to be adopted for the *sādhanā* is styled Prajñā. Again in some places Prajñā is the word for female organ which is the seat of all pleasure *(mahāsukha)*. Upāya and Prajñā are also called the thunder *(vajra)* and the lotus *(padma)* respectively, the former symbolizing the male organ *(maṇi, liṅga)* and the latter, the female *(yoni)*.

According to the original Mahāyāna conception, Sunyatā or perfect wisdom, and Karuṇā, or universal compassion, generate in one's mind the *Bodhi-citta*, a state in which one is free from all worldliness. The *Bodhi-citta* next proceeds on an upward march, through ten different stages *(bhūmis)*, and when the last stage is reached one becomes a perfect Bodhisattva. Tāntric Buddhism interprets the whole thing in a different way. Here Sunyatā is identified with Prajñā, the female principle, and Kāruṇā with Upāya, the male, and it is held that the inner union of the

two produces supreme bliss. Since the human body is the abode of Buddha, and also the epitome of the Universe, liberation must come through the actions of the body alone *(kāya-sādhanā)* and thus gross sex pleasure even can lead one to the realisation of the ultimate reality.

With the identification of Prajñā and Upāya with the female and male principles respectively, the idea of Śakti and Śiva was established in the Buddhist Tantras. From a metaphysical point of view Prajñā is the passive spectator, while Upāya or Karuṇā is the active agent that stirs up 'waves of mentation' in Prajñā. This idea seems to be closely akin to the popular Sāṅkhya view, and thus the metaphysical significance of Prajña and Upāya has a close bearing on the conception of Śakti and Śiva. The only difference is that in Śāktism, the male spirit (Śiva or Puruṣa) is the passive spectator whose existence is necessary to stir up energy in Prakṛti (Śakti or the female principle), and it is Prakṛti or Śakti that is the only active world force. But notwithstanding this difference in notion, Prajñā and Upāya have throughout been drawn in the image of Śiva and Śakti.

In the first state of its transformation, as we have already pointed out, Mahāyāna Buddhism was subdivided into two distinct schools, the Mantra-yāna (nāya) and Pāramitā-yāna. The former seems to be the introductory stage from which other offshoots like Vajrayāna, Kālacakrayāna, Sahajayāna, etc. arose in later times.

The justification of the name Vajrayāna is probably due to the term *Vajra* in place of *Śūnyatā*, i.e. the void nature of the self and all entities. According to this school, the ultimate reality is Vajrasattva who as the Primal Enlightened One is Adi-Buddha, possessed of five kinds of knowledge as attributes that give rise to five Dhyānī-Buddhas, *viz.* Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi and Akṣobhya, each associated with a female principle (śakti) of his own *viz.* Vajradhātvīśvarī, Locanā, Māmakā, Pāṇḍarā and Ārya-Tārā respectively. The consort of Vajrasattva himself is variously called as Vajra-Sattvātmika, Vajra-Vārāhī, Prajñā-Pāramitā, etc. Each god is to be meditated on as in union with his Śakti or Prajñā. In sculpture we have reflection of this. About the tenth century AD, the Kālacakrayāna school developed within the fold of Vajrayāna, the supreme deity of which is Śrī-Kālacakra. Kāla represents Prajñā and

Cakra Upāya, and thus Kālacakra implies the absolute union of the female and male principles. Essentially there is little difference between Vajrayāna and Kālacakrayāna. Sahajayāna on the other hand was a revolutionary form which denied all conventionalism, ceremonialism, muttering of *mantras*, etc. of Vajrayāna. The Sahajiyā Buddhists adopted human nature itself as the best appliance for realising the truth, and hence they called their path the easiest and the most natural (*sahaja*).[1] To explain their viewpoints, we think, something more should be stated.

"The real origin of the Buddhist Sahajiyā cult", observes S.B. Dasgupta,[2] "is not to be sought exclusively or even mainly in any of the theories and practices of Buddhism proper either in its Hīnayāna or Mahāyāna aspect. The real origin of the cult lies more outside Buddhism than inside it. The Buddhist Sahajiyā cult, notwithstanding the Buddhist tone and colour which it assumes, is essentially an esoteric Yogic cult. Side by side with the commonly known theological speculations and religious practices, there has been flowing in India an important religious undercurrent of esoteric Yogic practices from a pretty old time; these esoteric practices, when associated with the theological speculations of the Śaivas and the Śāktas, have given rise to the Śaiva and Śākta Tāntricism; when associated with Buddhist speculations these esoteric practices have given rise to the composite religious system of Buddhist Tāntricism; and, again, when associated with the speculations of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism the same esoteric practices have been responsible for the growth of the esoteric Vaiṣṇavite cult, known as the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā movement."

The Sahajiyās never prescribe any unnatural strain on human nature. Great importance is laid in Sahajiyā literature on human body which is believed to be the abode of truth and also the medium of realising the truth. The bliss produced through the union of the male and the female, symbolizing Prajñā and Upāya, i.e. the Bodhicitta, is conceived as *Sahaja* or the innate nature of the self and the world around. Prajñā or the goddess manifests herself in every woman, and every man is the embodiment of Upāya, the male principle, and their union alone can

1 Dasgupta, *ITB*, 83ff; *ORC*, 39ff; Bagchi, *BDS*, 71ff.
2 *ORC*, XXXIV.

produce supreme bliss. In the *Caryā* songs we find mention of this female principle variously called as Ḍombī, Śavarī, Yoginī, Nairāmani, Sahaja-sundarī, etc., and there is also frequent mention of the union of the aspirant with this personified female deity.

The conception of the four plexuses or lotuses located in different parts of the body along the spinal cord is a prominent aspect of Buddhist *Kāya-sādhanā.* The first situated in the navel region represents the Nirmāna-kāya of the Buddha, the second in the cardiac region represents the Dharma-kāya; the third near the neck represents the Sambhoga-kāya; and the fourth in the *uṣṇīṣakamala* or head represents the Vajra-kāya or Sahaja-kāya. The female principle remaining in the Nirmāna-kāya is symbolized as Caṇḍālī, and in her upward march she is often described as Ḍombī, and when raised in the highest stage, she is Sahaja-sundari. The aspirants, both male and female, must realise their true self as Upāya and Prajñā respectively and with this realisation they are to perform sexual intercourse and act in such a way as the downward motion of the seeds may be checked and an upward motion given to it till it reaches the *Uṣṇīṣakamala* and remains there motionless. The Buddhist conception was influenced by the Śākta Tantras according to which six nerve-plexuses or lotuses *(Ṣaṭ-cakra)*—Mūlādhāra, Svādhisṭhāna, Maṇipura, Anāhata, Viśuddha and Ājñā—can be located in the human body.[1]

Tāntric Buddhism was very popular in Eastern India and also in parts of Kashmir and Nepal. In Eastern India Nalandā, Odantapurī and Vikramaśila were important monasteries. The monastery of Somapurī, the site of which is represented by Paharpur in North Bengal, was in a flourishing condition till the eleventh century. Another was at Jagaddala in North Bengal which was established by Rāmapāla. In Kashmir, as in Bengal, Vajrayāna and Kālacakrayāna found a fertile soil. The *Tangyur* furnishes us with the names of a fairly large number of Vajrācāryas and Kālacakrācāryas of Kashmir of this period. Buddhism was undoubtedly a great religious force in many parts of Northern India down to the end of the twelfth century, but the invasions of the Muslims and the ruthless destruction of the

[1] *Infra.*

Buddhist monasteries by them had a disastrous effect on Buddhism. The fall of the monasteries meant the collapse of organisation and discipline in the absence of which the tone and colour of Buddhism could not be maintained, and when these were lost the separate existence of Buddhism became meaningless.

While Buddhism disappeared from India, Jainism was still a force in Gujarat and Rajasthan. But it was practically isolated and receiving diminishing importance, although its followers contributed much to the causes of architecture and literature during the period under review. Many temples of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Kathiawar bear evidence of the Jain contribution to architecture. Medieval sculptures hailing from diverse sites of Rajasthan are associated with Jain cults. Special mention should be mentioned in this connexion of the ceiling reliefs of the Neminātha temple of Mount Abu, built by Tejahpala in AD 1230. In the field of literature, the Jain authors did much for the progress of Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa. In spite of all this, Jainism, due to its innate rigidity and conservative character, failed to recruit new followers. Under the patronage of the later Cālukyas and Hoysalas, it was able to maintain itself in the Deccan and South India. But the Hoysala rulers were later converted to Vaiṣṇavism, while the Coḷas and the Pāṇḍyas, who were bigoted Śaivas, did not even hesitate to persecute the Jains. The Jain Kalacuri ruler Vijjala was dethroned by a revolution led by the Vīraśaivas. Still Jainism survived, and survives even today, mainly due to three reasons. First of all, Jainism had its maximum followers among the wealthy merchant communities. Secondly, the strongholds of Jainism suffered less from the iconoclastic fury of the early Muslim invaders. And lastly, the influence of Tāntricism upon Jainism was not so vigorous as to change its basic character.

A section of the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal developed a typical Sahajiyā cult of their own. "A close study of the literature of the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās will leave no room for doubting the clear fact that it records nothing but the spirit and practices of the earlier Buddhist and Hindu Tāntric cults, of course in a distinctly transformed form wrought through the evolution of centuries

in different religious and cultural environments."[1] The Mainamati Plate (13th century) speaks of the existence of the Sahajiyā cult in Tripura. Caṇḍīdāsa (14th century) was probably a Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā and in his *Śrī Kṛṣṇakīrtana* we can trace some of the fundamental doctrines of this sect. In Sahajiyā Vaiṣṇavism, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, like Śiva and Śakti, or Upāya and Prajñā, symbolise the male and female principles. The Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyā ideal holding men and women to be nothing but physical manifestation of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā should therefore be taken into account in its proper historical perspective.

The conception of Rādhā was not developed even in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* which was composed about the tenth century AD.[2] But in the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva, composed about the twelfth century, and in the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* (thirteenth century) we find that Rādhā has become a driving force of Vaiṣṇavism. This gradual increase of her influence was probably the religious consequence of the dualistic interpretation of the Vedānta by the Vaiṣṇava philosophers. According to Rāmānuja (1016-1137), Māyā or Prakṛti, the śakti of Brahman, is subject to transformation or *pariṇāma* and hence the instrumental cause of creation. This energy of Brahman is deified in the form of Śrī or Lakṣmī, the consort of Nārāyaṇa. This idea was advanced by Nimbārka (twelfth century AD) who gave exclusive prominence to the conception of Kṛṣṇa attended by the cowherdesses headed by Rādhā. Madhva (thirteenth century), founder of the Dvaita school, however, did not favour the conception of Kṛṣṇa attended by Rādhā. Following Rāmānuja, he conceived of Brahman and his śakti in the forms of Viṣṇu (Nārāyaṇa) and Lakṣmī (Śrī) residing in heaven, and this conception emphasises their greatness and majesty (aiśvarya). But the conception of Rādhā, which distinguishes the followers of Nimbārka, and later Vallabha and Caitanya, reveals a taste of Gods companionship in the *Vṛndāvanalīlā*, the most intimate human social relationship in which he appears along with his consort as human being among other humans without transcending the limitations of manhood.

[1] Dasgupta, *ORC*, 134-35.

[2] For the antiquity of the Rādhā cult see *ABORI*, XXXVI, 231-57, also Dasgupta, *SK*.

Śaivism during the period under review had theoretically merged into Śāktism and also the latter into the former. As we have stated above, in spite of all criticisms of Śaṅkara against the Śākta religion, two authoritative Śākta texts—*Prapañcasāra Tantra* and *Saundaryalaharī*— are ascribed to him. A section of the followers of Kashmir Śaivism developed a peculiar monistic form of Śāktism known as *Śāktyadvayavāda* according to which Śakti is not different from Śiva and as such the material world is the *pariṇāma* or consequence of Śakti. Somānanda criticised this *Śāktyadvayavāda* for its emphasis on Śakti as the only substance. Although he was a Śaiva in conviction, his analysis of Vāk is a valuable contribution to Śākta thought. Śāktism has also been thoroughly dealt with in Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka, Malinīvijayavārttika, Parātriṃśikavivaraṇa, Pratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśiṇī, etc.* In Kṣemarāja's *Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya*, Gorakṣa's *Mahārthamañjarī* and others; the mystic, theological, epistemic, psychological and metaphysical aspects of the Śaiva-Śākta Āgamas have been discussed.

Vīraśaivism or Liṅgāyatism, which resorts to the primitive aspects of the Śiva-Śakti cult, envisages an integral association between Śiva and Śakti, known as *Śaktiviśiṣṭādvaitavāda*. Here the potential and material moment of the Absolute is called Śiva while the actual and formal moment is called Śakti. It holds that creation is the result of the *vimarśa-śakti* of Śiva. Śakti is the power which resides eternally in Śiva as his inseparable attribute. She is *mūla prakṛti* or *māyā* which evolves herself into the universe. As heat is to fire and light to sun, Śakti is to Śiva, inseparably united with him as his attribute.

Another school of Śaivism which flourished in South India during the period under review was Śaiva Siddhānta. This school conceives of Śiva as the operative cause of the world and not as the material cause. Śakti (māyā) is existent and material cause of the world. The followers of this school think, on the basis of the *Satkāryavāda* of the Sāṅkhya, that the material world, which is an effect, must have a material cause, and the constituents of the cause cannot be qualitatively different from those of the effect. The world is material, devoid of consciousness, and therefore the immaterial *brahman* cannot be regarded as its cause. Māyā is the primordial stuff of which the world is made. Being non-intelligent, Māyā cannot evolve of itself. It requires

the guidance of Śiva who acts on it through its *cit-śakti.* Thus guided Māyā projects from itself the *tattvas* which constitute the universe.

Śrīkaṇṭha, a contemporary of Rāmānuja, expounded a system of Śaivism which is called Sivādvaita. According to this school, Śiva or *brahman* is the material as well as the operative cause of the world. He is both immanent and transcendent, but effects the manifestation of the world through his Śakti or power which is divided into three aspects—*icchā* (will), *jñāna* (knowledge) and kriyā (action).

While the different schools of Śaivism were thus setting up their cosmological ideas in terms of the relation between Śiva and Śakti, there were others who were still following the older tribal rituals. Mention should be made in this connexion of the Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas who were mentioned by their opponents as representing the horrid and repulsive forms of Śaivism. In the absence of any literature of their own, any conclusion drawn from the writings of the opponents must be one-sided and unhistorical. According to tradition, Śaṅkara had a philosophical contest with them. Their beliefs and practices are mentioned, evidently in a distorted way, in the *Śiva Purana* and other Saiva texts. According to Rāmānuja, the Kāpālikas maintained that an individual could attain the highest bliss by concentrating his mind on the soul seated on the *female organ.* They worshipped Śiva as Bhairava with his wife Caṇḍikā.

In the literary products of this age, the male and female principles in their personified forms were given much prominence. The anthologies compiled between AD 1000 and 1300—e.g. the *Subhāṣitāvali* of Vallabhadeva, the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* of Srīdhardeva, the *Sūktimuktāvalī* of Jalhaṇa, etc.—give a nice picture of the domestic life of Śiva and Devī, their love-plays and quarrels and other aspects collected from different sources. The stotrakāvyas of this age, e.g. the *Caṇḍi-Kuca-Pañcāśikā* of Lakṣmana Ācarya describe the physical charms of the goddess. In regional literatures also Śiva and Pārvatī began to figure as hero and heroine. The popular theme of Śiva's marriage with Pārvati found expression in Harihara's Kannaḍa work *Girijā-kalyāna* which was composed about the twelfth century AD. Nannecôda's Telugu *Kumārasambhavam* should also be mentioned in this connexion. The Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta scriptures reveal much of

the philosophical aspects of Śiva and Śakti, and this also holds good in the case of Marathi Nātha literature. The *Caryāpadas*, generally regarded as the specimens of Old Bengali, although they deal with Buddhist esoterism, are really the precursors of later Śiva-Śakti-oriented literature of which we shall refer to in the next chapter.

The *Hevajra Tantra* of the Buddhists, which was composed about the middle of the eighth century AD, enumerates the following four holy regions as *pīṭhas* or resorts of the goddess: (1) Jālandhara, (2) Oḍiyāna, (3) Pūrṇagiri, and (4) Kāmarūpa.[1] Other Buddhist works, such as the *Sādhanamālā*,[2] give the four names as Oḍiyāna or Uḍḍiyāna, Pūrṇagiri, Kāmarūpa or Kāmākhyā and Śrīhaṭṭa or Sirihaṭṭa. Jālandhara in the Punjab region seems to have been recognised as one of the four *pīṭhas* even down to the late medieval period. Oḍiyāna or Uḍḍiyāna is located in the Swat valley, although some scholars have wrongly identified it with Odra or Orissa in Eastern India. Hiuen Tsang not only noticed the prevalence of Śakti worship in Gandhāra, but has also left an account of the Tāntric practices among the peoples of Uḍḍiyāna. Its eminence in the Tāntric world is indicated by the recognised association of its name with the worship of the Buddhist deities Mārīchī, Kurukullā, etc. The identification of Pūrṇagiri is uncertain. Later sources locate it in Mahārashtra. The name may not be unconnected with that of the Pūrṇā (modern Paira), a branch of the Godāvarī.[3] It is interesting to note that the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang who lived for some time at the court of the Kāmarūpa king Bhāskaravarman in the seventh century was silent about the goddess Kāmākhyā. It is therefore not improbable that the presiding deity of Kāmarūpa did not quite attain her pre-eminence in the days of Hiuen Tsang. The goddess seems to be called Mahāgaurī in the records of Vanamāla (10th century) and Indrapāla (12th century), kings of Kāmarūpa.[4]

The *Rudrayāmala*, which was composed about the tenth century AD, mentions ten holy places associated with Śākta-Tāntric

[1] Bagchi, *ST*, 38.
[2] 453, 455.
[3] Sircar, *SP*, 94.
[4] Bhattacharya, *KS*, intro.

practices. These ten *pīṭhas*, which include the celebrated four mentioned above are: (5) Vārāṇasī (Benaras), (6) Jvalantī (Jvālāmukhī of later texts), (7) Māyāvatī (near Hardwar), (8) Madhupurī (Mathura), (9) Ayodhyā (near Fyzabad, U.P.), and (10) Kāñci (Conjeeveram in the Chingleput district). The *Kubjikātantra* enumerates 42 centres of Śakti cult: Māyāvatī, Madhupurī, Kāśī, Gorakṣakāriṇī, Hiṅgulā, Jālandhara, Jvālāmukhī, Nāgarasambhava, Rāmagiri, Godāvarī, Nepāla, Karṇasūtra, Mahākarṇa, Ayodhyā, Kurukṣetra, Siṃhala, Maṇipura, Hṛṣikeśa, Prayāga, Badarī, Ambikā, Vardhamāna or Ardhanālaka, Triveṇī, Gaṅgāsāgara saṅgama, Nārikela, Virajā, Uḍḍiyāna, Kamalā, Vimalā, Māhiṣmatī, Vārāhī, Tripurā, Vāgmatī, Nīlavāhinī, Govardhana, Vindhyagiri, Kāmarūpa, Ghaṇṭākarṇa, Hayagrīva, Mādhava, Kṣīragrāma and Vaidyanātha.[1]

About 1030 AD, Albīrūnī wrote: "In inner Kashmir, about two or three days' journey from the capital in the direction towards the mountains of Bolor, there is a wooden idol called Śāradā, which is much venerated and frequented by pilgrims."[2] The Śāradā-maṭha on the borders of Kashmir is mentioned in such other works as the *Śaktisaṅgama Tantra*.[3] The temple of Śāradā is also mentioned in Kalhana's *Rājataraṅginī*.[4] The ruins of Sardi, where it stood, lie at the confluence of the Kishengaṅgā and Kankatori rivers. The old shrine is substituted by the late Śāradā temple at Gusha which is now visited by pilgrims.[5] It should be pointed out in this connexion that very few independent Śakti temples existed in North India during the period with which we are concerned in the present chapter. In South India also Śakti shrines could only raise their heads within the compounds of the great Śiva temples. We had already occasion to refer to the Cola inscriptions speaking of two different varieties of temples, *Śrīkoyil* and *Tirumuṟṟam*, respectively denoting the shrines for male gods and female deities.

In Rajasthan, the shrines of Saciyā Mātā and Piplā Devī, belonging to the later series of the Osian group of temples, should be mentioned in this connexion. The principal back niche of the

1 Sircar, *SP*, 17-19.
2 Sachau, *AI*, I, 117.
3 *IC*, VIII, 38, 49.
4 VIII. 2556, 2706.
5 Stein, *RT*, II; 279-89.

former preserves an image of Mahiṣamardinī addressed as Saccikā or Saciyā in the inscriptions of vs 1234 and 1236.[1] At Bikaner, there is a temple of the eight-armed Durgā, popularly known as Nāgenekji and another of this kind is at Bhainsolgarh in the Udaipur district. Shrines dedicated to the goddess Kālikā are found at Achalgarh (Mt. Abu), Chitor, Nasirabad and Dholpur and those to the goddess Cāmuṇḍā at Jodhpur, Jaswantpur, Bhinmal, Ajmer and other places. An image of Ambā was installed at Ambā by the Kacchwaha king Kankal Rao in 1037 AD, who built a temple over it. The Mātṛkā cult was popular at Mandor. Besides the forms mentioned above, Śakti was worshipped under different local names in Rajasthan, e.g. Karṇimātā (Deshnokh), Mokalmātā (Bāli), Khokrimātā (Tivri), Śākambharī, Āśāpurī (Sambhar), Kaivasamātā (Parvatsar), Khimalmātā (Vasantgarh), Kailādevī (Karauli), Sakraimātā (Khandela), Jinamātā (Raivasa), Susānimātā (Morkhana), etc. Of the Śakti temples of Gujarat of this age mention may be made of the shrine of Ranik Devī at Wadhwan in Kathiawar and that of Limboji Mātā at Dhelmal.

In Central India, a few of the Amarkantak and Khajuraho group of temples were dedicated to Śakti. An image of Śarasvatī was installed at Dhara by Bhoja (1000-1055 AD) which reveals Paramāra sculpture at the best. Other specimens of the goddess is found at Mandu, on the walls of the Nīlakaṇṭha temple at Udaipur, within the enclosures of the Mahākāla temple at Ujjayinī, and other places. The temple of Devī Jagadambā at Khajuraho is marked by exuberance of sculptures and rich ornamentation. The *Caunsat Yoginī* temple at Khajuraho[2] should specially be mentioned for its architectural traits. Temples dedicatad to sixty-four *Yoginīs* are scattered all over in Central India. We have already referred to the temple at Bheraghat which is 116 feet in internal diameter with 81 peripheral chapels together with a shrine containing an image of Umā-Maheśvara. The sixty-four *Yoginī* temples at Mitauli near Padhauli (eleventh century) is marked by 65 principal chapels and a circular central shrine with *maṇḍapa* in front.[3] Circular *Yoginī* temples are also

[1] *JBRS*, XLI (1), 1-12.
[2] Coomaraswamy, *HIIA*, 110.
[3] *ASIAR*, 1915-16, 18.

found at Ranipur Jharial in the old Patna State[1], Dudhai in the Lalitpur district[2] and in the old Kalahandi state.[3]

The temples of Mohinī, Kapālinī and Gaurī at Bhuvaneswar, Vimalā at Purī, Kicakeśvarī at Khiching, Virajā at Jajpur, Maṅgalā at Katakpur, Curcikā at Banki, Ugratārā at Bhusandapur, Vārāhī at Chaurasi, Śāralā at Jhankad, Solapuamā and Caṇḍī at Cuttack, Śaptamātṛkā at Belkhandi, Dharmaśālā and the neighbouring areas of Jajpur, Yoginīs at Hirapur, Śamaleśvarī at Śambalpur, etc. show the wide distribution of Śakti cult in Orissa. A few of these temples, however belong to a later date. The Gaurī temple at Bhuvaneswar contains a Śakti image as its presiding deity and in the Ananta-Vāsudeva temple of the thirteenth centuary AD Ekānaṃśā is worshipped along with Balarāma and Vāsudeva. Images of Mahiṣamardinī are found on the walls of the Vaitāla, Śiśireśvara and Mārkaṇḍeśvara temples. A large number of Tāntric Buddhist deities like different kinds of Tārā, Heruka, Kurukullā, Aparājitā, etc. are found from Udayagiri, Ratnagiri and Lalitagiri.[4]

From different sites of Bengal numerous Śakti images, belonging to the period under review, are found, many of which are identified with the Tāntric deities. Special mention should be made in this connexion of the famous Caṇḍī image from Dalbazar, Dacca (3rd year of Lakṣmaṇasena) which is often identified with Bhuvaneśvarī. A four-armed image of Sarvāṇī, found at Mangalbari, Dinajpur, has been assigned to the Pāla period. Another image of the same age, that of a two-handed Durgā, hails from South Mohammadpur in the Tippera district. Of other four-armed goddesses, reference should be made to the images of the Devī from Mandoli (Rajsahi) and Maheswarpara (Khulna), and seated images from Bogra, Nowgong (with Kārttikeya and Gaṇeśa; identified with Sarvamaṅgalā) and Niamatpur (sandstone image identified with Aparājitā). From Kagajipara, Vikrampur, is found a four-armed goddess rising from a *liṅga.* This image has been identified with Mahāmāyā or Tripurabhairavī. A six-armed seated goddess, identified with Bhuvaneśvarī, is found at Shekati in Jessore district, while

1 Fergusson, *HIEA*, II, 151.
2 Mukherji, *RARLD*, PI. 39.
3 Cunningham, *ASR*, XIII, 132 ff.
4 Sahu, *BO*, 181 ff.

another, a twenty-armed goddess identified with Mahālakṣmī, belonging to the tenth century, is found at Simla in the Rajshahi district. Ten-armed Mahiṣamardinī forms are found from Dulmi (Manbhum) and Sakta (Dacca), both belonging to the twelfth century. From Porsha in Dinajpur is found a relief of Nava-durgā. The central figure is eight-armed while the others are sixteen-armed. At Betna in the same district is found an image of a thirty-two-armed goddess fighting with the demons. Of the Mātṛkā images reference should be made to those of Cāmuṇḍā from Betna, the ruins of Rampal and Attahasa. A Brahmāṇī image is found at Devagram in Nadia. Images of the Buddhist goddess Tārā are found at Ujani (Faridpur), Sompara (Dacca) and Majvadi (Faridpur) and that of Ugratārā at Sikarpur (Bakarganj). Of other images of Buddhist goddesses reference should be made to those of Prajñāpāramitā (Maldah), Sitāta-patrā (Tippera), Cuṇḍā (Niyamatpur, Rajshahi) and Parṇaśabarī (Vikrampur). A Jain image of the goddess Ambikā with children is found at Nalgora in 24 Parganas. Umā-Maheśvara and Ardhanārīśvara images of this age are rare in Bengal.[1]

In South India, the Amman shrines came into vogue from about the eleventh century, and since then the twin shrines of Śiva and Amman came to represent the dual aspect of Śiva-Śakti. Śiva or Kāmeśvara is *prakāśa* or subjective illumination, while Śakti, known as Kāmeśvarī, Śivakāmā, Kāmakoṭi, Lalitā and Tripurasundarī, is *vimarśa* or Śiva's objective experience of himself. These two aspects of the ultimate reality is symbolically represented by the Śrīcakra which contains two sets of triangles, one set composed of four male or Śiva triangles and the other of five female or Śakti triangles. In the centre, which is a point *(bindu)*, reside Kāmeśvara and Lalitā in *abheda* union. Tradition ascribes to Śaṅkara the installation of the *Śrīcakra* in important temples. The most celebrated is that in the Kāmākṣī temple at Kāñchi, known as the *Kāmakoṭipīṭha*. There is a *Śrīcakrapīṭha* at Courtallam and at Avadaiyarkovil in the Tanjore district. It appears that the Tāntric *kāya-sādhanā* had also influenced the conception of South Indian deities and their resorts. The nerve-plexuses or lotuses of the body through which the *kuṇḍalinī-śakti* reaches the *sahasrāra* in the head are brought

[1] Banerjea in *HB*, 450ff.

in relation to the holy places of the South. Thus, Tiruvarur represents the *mūlādhāra*, Kāñchi the *nābhi*, Chidāmbaram the *anāhata* and Jambukeśvaram the *ājñācakra*.

The *Yāmalas* give us for the first time a well-developed Tāntric pantheon. The existence of the principal *Yāmalas*, excepting the *Brahma Yāmala* and fragments of the *Rudra Yāmala*, is not known to us. The former is preserved in Nepal in a manuscript of AD 1052. It has two supplements, known as the *Jayadratha Yāmala* and the *Piṅgalāmata*. The *Jayadratha Yāmala* also exists in a manuscript of about the same period. It is divided into four sections called *ṣaṭka*, each containing six thousand *ślokas*. The text gives detailed information on the various modes of Tāntric *sādhanā*, together with a description of the various branches of the Tāntric literature and also of divinities, mostly Śaktis, such as Kālikā, Saṅkarṣaṇī, Kālasaṅkarṣaṇī, Carcikā, Ḍāmbarakālī, Gahaneśvarī, Ekatārā, Śavaśabarī, Vajravatī, Rakṣākālī, Indīvarakālikā, Dhanadakālikā, Ramaṇīkālikā, Īśāṇakālikā, Mantramātā, Jīvakālī, Saptākṣarā, Ṛkṣakarṇī, Bhairavaḍākinī, Kālantakī, Vīryakālī, Prajñakālī, Saptārṇakālī and Siddhilakṣmī. The supplementary literature of the *Yāmala* group thus indicates a Śākta orientation of the Tāntric culture. This character of the Tantras became firmly established by the thirteenth century.[1]

The *Sammoha Tantra*, another descriptive work of this period, deals with various traditions and *mantras* of the Kālikāmāta, the geographical classification of the Tantras and a detailed account of the Vidyās or cults belonging to different schools. So far as the geographical classification is concerned, it distributes the Tantras into four areas Kerala, Kāshmīra, Gauḍa and Vilāsa. Then it gives a detailed description of the Vidyās or goddesses, nearly hundred in number, all representing various aspects of Śakti, showing that the Tantras by this time had assumed a complete Śākta character and that they had assimilated a very large number of cults of various origins, regional, tribal and sectarian. This state of things must have been attained by the fourteenth century, when the *Sammoha Tantra* seems to have

[1] Bagchi, *ST*, 109ff.

assumed its final form.[1]

According to the *Kaulajñānanirṇaya*, a work of the eleventh century, the Kaula class of Tantras was introduced by Matsyendra Nātha, who was probably the founder of the Yoginī-kaula of Kāmarūpa. The term *Kula*, as we have seen above, stands for Śakti. There were a good number of Kaula-schools, *e.g.*, Vṛṣaṇottha Vahni, Sadbhāva, Padottiṣṭha, Mahā, Siddha, Jñananirṇiti, Siddhāmṛta, Sṛṣṭi, Candra, Śaktibheda, Ūrmi, Jñāna and so on. According to Bagchi[2] the Yoginī-Kaula of Matsyendra Nātha had something in common with the Buddhist Tantras of the Sahajiyā class. This syncretism probably led to the growth of the Nātha sect and the Vaiṣṇava Sahajiyās of the succeeding centuries.

The aspirants of all these groups believed in the use of psychic energy in bringing about the union of the two principles. The body was recognised as the abode of all truth, and the best medium for realising the truth. Reference has already been made to the Buddhist form in which we have the conception of four plexuses or lotuses within the body. Among the innumerable nerves of the body, three are the most important, two by the two sides of the spinal cord and one in the middle. With these two side-nerves are identified the Buddhist principles of Prajñā and Upāya. In the Śākta Tantras the nerve in the right, Upāya of the Buddhist, is known as piṅgalā, and that of the left, Prajñā of the Buddhists, as *iḍā*. These two represent the principle of duality, and the middle one, variously known as *suṣumnā*, *avadhūtika* or *sahaja* represents absolute unity. The Śakti which resides in man, and the development of which is one of the aims of Tāntricism, is called *kuṇḍalinī*. It resides in the *mūlādhāra*, the lower extremity of the spinal cord, where it remains latent and sleeps quietly. When roused up by successful manipulation, this *kuṇḍalinī* ascends to the next higher stage, *viz*. *svādhiṣṭhāna* which is situated near the root of the generative organ. Thence it moves on to the centres, *maṇipura* (the navel region), *anāhata* (heart region) and *viśuddha* (junction of the spinal cord and the medulla oblongata) and finally to the *ājñā* (between the eyebrows) where the Śakti becomes manifest

[1] *Ibid*, 96ff.
[2] *KMT*, intro, 33.

in the form of a flash of light. At *sahasrāra*, or the highest cerebral region, the Śakti meets its source.

The goddess Śākinī resides in the *mūlādhāra*, Lākinī in *maṇipura*, Rākinī in *anāhata*, Ḍākinī in *viśuddha*, Kāminī in *svādhiṣṭhāna* and Hakini in the *ājñā*, according to the later Tāntric manuals. The Kuṇḍalinī Śakti is the original female principle, the Devī, whom the aspirant has to send from the lower extremity of the spinal cord to the highest cerebral point where she meets Śiva, and their union produces the liquor of immortality. Wine is the nectar which flows from the union of the Kuṇḍalinī Śakti with Śiva at the *sahasrāra* in the head. *Maithuna*, one of the five *tattvas*, symbolized by the concept of unity behind all duality, is also brought in harmony with the concept of the union of Śiva and Sākti which takes place in the *sahasrāra*.

Most of the available Tāntric texts belong to the late medieval period, and hence it appears that from about the fourteenth century onwards, the Śākta-Tāntric cults had gained a qualitatively changed character and become woven into the texture of all the religious practices current in India. It was due to the fact that the Śākta-Tāntric cults offered a sharp criticism and rejection of all external formalities in regard to religious practices and spiritual quests, revived the mystical, obscure and esoteric, but protestant and heterodox elements of the existing religious systems and upheld a new philosophy of life which consisted of the recognition of the *guru* as essential for any spiritual exercise and quest, of the human body as the seat and habitat of all religious and spiritual experience, and of the experience of the ultimate reality on one of inexpressible happiness and absolute non-duality. The reason behind such dynamic changes in the existing religious conception, initiated by the Śākta-Tāntric cults, must be traced to the changing and challenging fortunes of the socio-political history of this country, of which we shall refer to in the next chapter.

7

LATE MEDIEVAL ŚĀKTISM

(From 1300-1700 AD)

It has been shown in the preceding chapter that the major part of India remained free from the Muslim domination till almost the very end of the thirteenth century. But the political situation changed gradually in favour of the Muslim rulers, and the evolution of the political process was complete when the Mughals established a stable empire in the second half of the sixteenth century. The end of the Hindu ruling dynasties, followed by almost wholesale destruction of temples and monasteries by the Muslim invaders, led to the extermination of the sources that nourished Hinduism. The Muslims consolidated an alien political authority, an alien religious system and an alien culture marked by plunder, destruction of temples and conversion of countless Hindus either by persuasion or by force. This process went on throughout the period of the Delhi Sultanate and later too, during the Mughal rule.

Despite all this the Hindus survived, although the terrific pressure of Islam had eventually changed the existing patterns of their society and religion. The Muslim rulers fought not only against the Hindus, but also amongst themselves, and in many such cases they had to depend on the political and economic support of the Hindu chiefs and landlords. Very few of the Muslim rulers could reign in peace, and challenge to their authority came, not from the conqured Hindus, but from men of their own religion, even from their kinsmen. The Muslim powers in India did not belong to the same racial group or the same level of material culture. Alauddin Khalji fought against

the Mongols who were also Muslims and did not hesitate to put countless Muslim prisoners to death. The relation between the Muslims who had already settled in India and those who were still outsiders was bitter. The Hindus who were converted into Islam were also looked down upon by other groups. This inner conflict of the Muslim interest in India was one of the causes for the survival of Hinduism under the Muslim rule.

The immediate effect of the Muslim onslaught on the Hindu society was the deterioration of what is known as the Brahmanical culture. In fact the Brāhmaṇas withdrew themselves altogether within their shells, adopting the 'habit of tortoise' *(kūrmavṛtti)*. Now that the grip of the Brāhmaṇas on the people was somewhat relaxed, the protestant and esoteric cults and sects came to the forefront, Śākta-Tāntric ideas, as we have seen above, had already become the driving force of Hinduism. From the fourteenth century onwards they gained greater dimensions. Śiva and Śakti formed the basis of the later Yogic schools, the Nātha cult, the Siddhas and other kindred sects. Side by side developed a saint tradition which insisted on the idea of direct communion with a personal God through love *(prema)* and devotion *(bhakti)*. The medieval saints like Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Nānak, Nāmadeva, Caitanya and others believed that the establishment of complete identity with God was possible only through complete surrender of one's own self to the beloved deity of one's heart. They did not believe in caste system in the existing Brāhmanical sense. A parallel movement is found in Islam also in the development of Sufism. Arabic and Persian classical Sufism had already been known in India from about the tenth and eleventh centuries, but by almost the fourteenth, it had been fully absorbed in India and had taken a somewhat different form with a great deal of such local colour and meaning as one finds in many a medieval mystic and devotional cult of India.[1]

During the period of the Delhi Sultanate there were three powerful Hindu kingdoms in India—Vijayanagara, Orissa and Mewar—and also a number of independent Hindu states like Assam, Nepal, Mithila, Mewar, etc. The early kings of Vijaya-

[1] Ray, *SGSS*, 12-18.

nagara were ardent Śaivas. To their credit goes the construction of a good number of temples each of which contained an Amman shrine representing a subsidiary temple for the enshrinement of the consort of the installed deity. The temples also contained *Kalyāṇa-maṇḍapa*, an open pillared pavilion with an elevated platform in the centre for the exhibition of the image of the deity and his consort on ceremonial occasions. Among the *Kalyaṇa-maṇḍapas* that may be assigned to the Vijayanagara epoch mention may be made of those in the Pārvatī temple at Chidambaram, in the temples of Varadarājasvāmin and Ekāmbaranātha at Kanchipuram, in the Jambukeśvara temples near Trichinopoly and in the Mārgaśākheśvara temple at Virinjipuram.[1] Vīraśaivism continued to spread in the Kannada country and even beyond its borders.

Later kings of Vijayanagara developed a partiality for Vaiṣṇavism, and under the Tuluva rulers it gained further strength. In South India, Rāmānuja's school of Vaiṣṇavism was divided into a number of sub-sects, like the Vaḍakalai, Teṅkalai, etc. Another school of Southern Vaiṣṇavism was set up by Viṣṇusvāmin, which was developed by Vallabha, (born in 1479) the propounder of Śuddhādavaitavāda. The Vallabha group insisted upon the concept of Rādhā as the consort of Kṛṣṇa, and its adherents sometimes dressed and acted like women, a parallel of which is found in Bengal Vaiṣṇavism also. Their aim was the realization of the Rādhā-bhāva, the emotions of Rādhā. Bengal Vaiṣṇavism received a great inspiration from Caitanya (1496-1533) who believed that Kṛṣṇa took his birth as a human being in order to experience the ardour of Rādhā's passion for him. No other saint carried to such an extent the emotional approach to God as a lover to his beloved.

Of other mystic saints Rāmānanda (fourteenth century) occupied a unique place in the history of religion in Medieval India. He was also a follower of Vaiṣṇavism and probably belonged to the school of Rāmānuja. He made no caste-distinction; rather he made it a fundamental tenet of his doctrine. In the place of the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā, Rāmānanda introduced the cult of Rāma and Sītā. Among the disciples of Rāmānanda, Kabīr (died in 1518) made no distinction between Hinduism and

[1] Fergusson, *HIEA*, I, 360 ff.

Islam. He refused to acknowledge caste-distinctions and like all other mystic saints insisted upon regional languages. He held that religion without *bhakti* was no religion at all. He had a large following both among Hindus and Muslims.[1] The same attitudes was shared by Nānak (1469-1538) the founder of the Sikh religion, to whose credit goes the successful attempt to bring together the Hindus and Muslims in a common fold of spiritual and social brotherhood. According to him, "at God's gate there dwell thousands of Brahmās, of Viṣṇus, of Śivas; thousands upon thousands of exalted Rāmas; there is one Lord over all spiritual lords, the creator whose name is true."[2]

Of the esoteric cults of Medieval India Nāthism is important. It is heterodox in character and its followers are still found in different parts of Northern and North Eastern India. Once it was also popular in some parts of Maharashtra. Modern Nāthism of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Nepal and Bihar has been mixed up with the principal existing religions of the said regions, while in Bengal and Assam, the Nātha-Yogīs want to preserve their separate identity. They often proclaim themselves as Rudraja-Brāhmaṇas and trace the essentials of their creed to the Vedas. The origin of Nāthism is covered with mystery. Fragments of medieval Nātha literature are preserved in Bengali language, a critical examination of which must show that Nāthism was originally a primitive Mother Goddess cult that came into India from outside.

However, judging by the North Indian regional literatures on the Nātha Yogis and the variety of myths and legends connected with them, it would seem that the Nātha movement in its developed form was a North Indian one and that it had amalgamated itself with the Śakti cult. Their religious discipline was that of *Haṭhayoga* which was an article of faith with them. Their objective was to attain the state of *jīvanmūkti* or immortality in life. Through the process of *Ulṭā-sādhanā*, that is, by making the semen flow upwards instead of downwards and the *Kāya sādhanā*, that is, by the disciplining of physical body, they believed that the imperfect body could be transformed into perfect and then into divine, which was the only way to over-

[1] Westcott, *KK*, 18-19.
[2] Macauliffe, *SR*, 41.

come decay and death. The right and left nerve channels were designated as the sun and the moon, the former standing for fire or heat and the latter for *somarasa*, the nectar essence. The sun was identified with Śakti or the female and the moon with Śiva or the male. The latter being the source of creation it was supposed to hold in its bosom the nectar which the former was always after to consume.[1] In Jayadratha's commentary on Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka* it is stated that the *Kulācāra* section of the Tantras were introduced by Matsyendranātha and Mīnanātha. According to the *Gorakṣasiddhānta saṃgraha* and also *Tantrarājatantra*, the Tantras were introduced on earth by the nine Nāthas.

Now we shall deal with Śāktism in its manifold forms. During the period under review three important Śākta Purāṇas were produced, viz. the *Devī Purāṇa*, the *Kālikā Purāṇa* and the *Devībhāgavata*.

In the *Devībhāgavata*, the Śākta goddess is conceived as the Ādya Śakti or primordial energy that resides in Brahmā as the creating principle, in Viṣṇu as the sustaining principle and in Śiva as the destructive principle. This Ādya Śakti pervades all space and animates everything of this phenomenal world.[2] The goddess who is unmanifested, takes three forms of Mahālakṣmī, Mahākālī and Mahāsarasvatī representing the *rājasa*, *sāttvika* and *tāmasa* attributes or *guṇas* of Prakṛti. Mahālakṣmī produces Brahmā and Śrī, Mahākālī produces Rudra and Trayī and Mahāsarasvatī produces Viṣṇu and Umā. The union of Brahmā and Trayī produces the world, that of Viṣṇu and Śrī maintains it and that of Rudra and Umā destroys it.[3] In the *Devīgītā*, which forms a part of the *Devībhāgavata*,[4] the following is put in the mouth of the Devi: "O king of the mountains, it was I who existed before the days of creation, and there was nothing beyond me. Wise men think me in terms of *cit*, *saṃvit*, *parabrahman* etc. My original form is beyond inference, beyond end, beyond illustration and even beyond the concepts of life and death. I am identical with my energy called *māyā*.

[1] Ray, *SGSS*, 129.
[2] I. 8.
[3] I. 8.
[4] VII. 32.

This *māyā* is neither *sat* (existent) neither *asat* (non-existent), nor a combination of both; it is beyond all these which exists until the final end. This *māyā* which is my inherent perpetual energy is like the heat of the fire, rays of the sun and light of the moon . . . . This *māyā* of mine is variously called *tapas*, *tamas*, *jaḍa*, *jñāna*, *pradhāna*, *prakṛti*, *śakti*, *aja*, etc. The Śaivas call it *vimarśa* while those well-versed in the Vedas call it avidyā." The conception of the Devī as the Supreme Being is further developed in the *Kālikā Purāṇa* in which she described as the supramental *prakṛti*, the material cause of the phenomenal world, and the embodiment of all energy, consciousness and bliss. The world owes its origin to her while she does not owe her origin to anything.[1] Similar ideas are met with in the *Devī Purāṇa*[2] which also explains the significance of the various names of the goddess by which she is invoked by the gods in the *Devīmāhātmya*.[3]

The Śākta Purāṇas also elaborate the exploits of the Devī mentioned in the earlier Purāṇas. In the *Devi Purāṇa* the goddess is conceived as the goddess of victory and is known by such names as Jayā, Vijayā, Aparājitā, Jayantī, etc.[4] Here she is associated with the slaying of the demons like Ghora, Subala, Ruru and others.[5] Though the *Kālikā Purāṇa* does not narrate any description of war, it occasionally refers to the slaying of Mahiṣa and others.[6] The *Devībhāgavata*[7] records the Devī's fight with Mahiṣāsura, Śumbha-Niśumbha, Durgama and Aruṇa.

The aforesaid Purāṇas also give a realistic picture of the local goddess later identified with the supreme being of the Śāktas. The *Kālikā Purāṇa* thus refers to the temple of the Tāntric goddess Siddheśvarī near Nandikuṇḍa, to the north-west of Kāmarūpa, Siddheśvarī on the river Vahuroka issuing from the Surasa mountain, that of Tripurā to the south-east of Kāmarūpa and that of the celebrated goddess Kāmākhyā.[8] It also

[1] V. 14ff.
[2] XVI. 14.
[3] XXXVII.
[4] II—XX.
[5] XXXIX, LXXXIII—LXXXVI.
[6] LX.
[7] V. 2-18, 21-31, VII-28; X. 13.
[8] LXXVII ff.

mentions seven *pīṭhas* associated with the limbs of Satī: Purṇagiri (neck and shoulder), Devīkūṭa (feet), Uḍḍiyāna (thighs), Kāmagiri (genitalia), the eastern point of Kāmarūpa (navel), the western point of Kāmarūpa (head) and Jālandhara (breast).[1] According to the *Devīpurāṇa*, in the tract between the Vindhya and Malaya the goddess was worshipped as Maṅgalā, in the south of the Himalaya as Nandā, on the Kiṣkindhyā hills as Bhairavī, at Kurukṣetra as Jayantī, at Kuśasthalī as Rudrāṇī, at Jalandhara as Bhadrakālī, at Kola as Mahālakṣmī, on the Sahyādri as Kālarātri, on the Gandhamādana as Ambika, at Ujjayini as Ujjanī, at Jambumārga as Mahākālī, in Videha as Bhadrakālikā, at Muṇḍi-pīṭha as Khaṇḍa-muṇḍā, on the Malayādri as Aghora, on the Laṅkādri as Kālikā, in Śākadvīpa as Vijaya, in Kuśadvīpa as Caṇḍā, on the Krauñca mountain as Yoginī, in Śalmaladvīpa as Varāṅganā, on the Mandara hills as Dhūtimā, and in the Puṣkara as Nārāyaṇī.[2] The *Devībhāgavata* also gives an important list of the Śākta *tīrthas*.[3]

In the *Devībhāgavata*,[4] we come across the process through which innumerable local goddesses are identified with the Supreme Goddess of the Śāktas. In every creation of the universe, it is said, the *mūlaprakṛti* assumes the different gradations of *aṃśarūpinī*, *kalārūpiṇī* and *Kalāṃśarūpiṇī*, or manifests herself in parts, smaller parts and further subdivisions. In the first grade she is represented by Durgā, Lakṣmī, Sarasvatī, Savitrī and Rādhā; in the second by Gaṅgā, Tulasī, Manasā, Ṣaṣṭhi, Maṅgalacaṇḍikā and Kālī; and in the third by the *grāmadevatās* or Village Mothers and by womenfolk in general. This indicates that with the development of the conception of an all-embracing female principle when need was felt for regarding the local goddesses as the manifestation of the Śākta Devī, they were primarily given recognition to represent the fragments of Prakṛti, while the more important and popular goddesses were given relatively higher positions.

The presiding deities of the *Pīṭhas* were also originally local goddesses, and the story of Satī's death, the falling of her limbs in different *Pīṭhas*, etc. were obviously invented to bring all

1 XVIII. 42-51.
2 XXXVIII. 3-9; XXXIX, 1-5, 16-21, XLIII. 64.
3 VII. 38. 5-30.
4 IX. i.

these goddesses in relation to the Śākta Devī. The *Mahābhārata* and the earlier Purāṇas, as we have seen above, make no mention of Satī's death. According to the versions of the *Devībhāgavata*[1] and the *Kālikā Purāṇa*,[2] Dakṣa did not invite Śiva at his sacrifice, and this humiliation led Satī, the wife of Śiva, to destroy her body. Other sources relate that Śiva became so inconsolable at the death of his wife that he took her dead-body on his shoulder and travelled aimlessly. In order to save Śiva from this madness the gods planned to cut the dead body piece by piece. Parts of Satī's body thus fell at different places, and these places came to be known as the *Pīṭhas*. Later accounts, especially those found in the late-medieval Bengali literature, had elaborated this episode while dealing with the holy resorts of the goddess.

The well known story of Rāma's Durgā worship before his final encounter with Rāvaṇa is absent in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Valmīki. The Bengali version of *Rāmāyaṇa*, attributed to Kṛttivāsa (fifteenth century), however, narrates the story. According to the *Devībhāgavata*,[3] Rāma worshipped the Devī by performing the *Navarātra* rite and by the grace of the goddess, he was able to rescue Sītā. According to the *Kālikā Purāṇa*,[4] Brahmā worshipped the Devi in Laṅkā from the first to the ninth full-moon day of *Āśvina*. For this, the goddess favoured Rāma and graced the battlefield with her presence. The earlier *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*[5] says that it was Rāma who worshipped the goddess on the sea-shore in Laṅkā, and Brahmā was the priest. The *bodhana* of the Devī commenced on the ninth new-moon day of the autumn. She was worshipped in a general way up to the sixth full-moon day, and from the seventh to the ninth she was specially worshipped. On the tenth day the image of the Devi was immersed and a victory festival *(vijayā)* was held because on the previous day Rāvaṇa was killed by the grace of the goddess. The same account is also found in the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*.[6]

1 VII. 30.
2 XVI. 18.
3 III. 30.
4 LX.
5 XXXVI-XLVIII.
6 I. 21-22.

It is not definitely known as to when the Durgā worship, *in its present form*, came into vogue. Vidyāpati (fourteenth-fifteenth century) in his *Durgābhaktitaraṅgiṇī* refers to the worship of the clay-image of the goddess, and detailed informations are found in Śūlapāṇi's *Durgotsavaviveka*, *Vāsantiviveka* and *Durgotsavaprayoga* (fifteenth-sixteenth century) Jīmūtavāhana's *Kālaviveka* (fifteenth century) and in the writings of Śrīnātha, Govindacandra, Raghunandana and others (sixteenth century). On the basis of the works mentioned above it may be suggested that the worship of Durgā, as we have it today, flourished between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries.

The *Māyātantra* speaks of the *Kulācāra* in connexion with the Durgā worship. The *Devīcarita* and *Navadurgāpūjārahasya* sections attributed to the *Rudrayāmala* give the story of Durgā's advent, the details of her worship in connexion with the Navarātra festival in autumn and those of what are called the nine forms of the goddess, *viz.*, Śailaputrī, Skandamātā, Kuṣmāṇḍī, Kātyāyanī, Brahmacāriṇī, Caṇḍaghaṇṭā, Kālarātri, Mahāgaurī and Devadūtī. The *Matsyasūkta*, quoted in the *Prāṇatoṣaṇītantra*, gives details of the autumnal festival and refers to the worship of different forms of the deity in different parts of the country, *e.g.*, eight-handed form in Odra, Kalinga and Madhyadeśa; eighteen-handed in Ayodhyā, Surāṣṭra, Srihaṭṭa and Kośala; twelve-handed in Mahendra, Himālaya, Kuru, Mathurā and Kedāra; ten-handed in Makaranda, Virāṭa, Kaumāra, Gauḍa and Pāripātra; four-handed in Marahaṭṭa, Nepāla, Kaccha and Kaṅkana; two-handed near the sea.[1] The *Tantrasāra* describes Durgā, the mode of her worship as well as a list of her hundred names. Some of her forms are also described in the *Śāradātilaka*.[2] Besides, there are quite a good number of *stotras* aud *kavacas*, related to Durgā, in various Tantras of the late-medieval period.

In the Durgā worship of the late-medieval and also of recent times primitive elements are found, and we may refer to *Śabarotsva* in this connexion. In the *Kālaviveka* of Jīmūtavāhana it is stated that this festival included topics or and songs about sex organs and also about sexual intercourse with requisite move-

[1] Chakravarty, *TSTRL*, 94-95.

[2] XI. 25, 37, 46.

ments of the body. Śūlapāṇi in his *Durgotsavaviveka* quotes an account of *Śabarotsava* from the *Kālikā Purāṇa*[1] according to which maidens and prostitutes must accompany the image on the day of its immersion, and people must exchange words relating to sexual organ and coitus in default of which they would be cursed by the goddess. The same is also stated by Raghunandana. The *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*, composed about the seventeenth century, introduces some modifications in regard to the words expressive of sexual organs and acts. It says that one should not pronounce such words before one's mother and daughter and also before the uninitiated.

Some of the authors, cited above, provide for a spring festival called Vāsantī Pūjā, just in the manner of the autumnal one. Govindānanda recommends the worship of Durgā on the eighth day of the bright half of Caitra while Śrīnātha and Bṛhaspati recommend the worship of Mahiṣamardinī on the ninth day. It appears that these recommendations were responsible for the present day worship of Annapūrṇā which falls on the above mentioned days. One form of Durgā is known as Jagaddhātrī whose special worship is prescribed by Śrīnātha and Bṛhaspati of the fifteenth century.

Many of the Tāntric texts known to us are quoted in the digests which occupy a very important place in the literature of the Tantras. Of the earlier digests may be mentioned the *Prapañcasāra* attributed to the great Śaṅkara and the *Śāradātilaka* of Lakṣmana Deśika. There are about half a dozen commentaries on the former including one attributed to Padmapādācārya, the wellknown disciple of Śaṅkara, while the latter had been commented upon by Mādhavabhaṭṭa, Rāghavabhaṭṭa and others. Rāghava's commentary was composed in 1484 AD. Of the later digests Kṛṣṇānanda's *Tantrasāra* stands unique, and it has a nice agreement with the *Śāradātilaka* regarding the descriptions of the deities. The Tantras describe numerous forms of Śaktis, a number of them being classed as the Mahāvidyās or Vidyās and the Nityās. The *Tantrasāra* quotes two lists of Mahāvidyās from the *Mālinīvijaya* and the *Muṇḍamālā*, of which the first one refer to Kālī, Tārā, Mahādurgā, Tvaritā, Chinnamastā, Vagvādini, Annapūrṇā, Pratyaṅgirā, Kāmākhyāvāsini, Bālā, Mātaṅgī

[1] LXI. 17-21.

and Śailavāsinī, while the second one mentions Kālī, Tārā, Bhuvaneśvarī, Bhairavī, Chinnamastā, Dhūmāvatī, Vagalā, Mātaṅgī and Kamalā as names of the ten Mahāvidyās. The *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*[1] substitutes Sundarī for Kamalā and Vagalāmukhi for Vagalā. Some later Tantras correlate the ten mahāvidyās with the ten *Avatāras* of Viṣṇu.[2]

In both the lists Kālī or Mahākālī is the first name whose cult must have become popular by this time. Even in the preceding age Abhinavagupta in his *Tantrāloka* referred to her thirteen forms: Sṛṣṭikālī, Saṃhārakālī, Sthitikālī, Raktakālī, Sukālī, Yamakālī, Mṛtyukālī, Rudrakālī, or Bhadrakālī, Paramārakakālī, Martaṇḍakālī, Kālāgnirudrakālī, Mahākālī and Mahabhairavaghoracaṇḍakālī. In the *Tantrasāra* and the *Āgamatattvavilāsa* of Raghunātha, we have the following forms; Dakṣiṇākālī, Mahākālī, Smasānakālī, Guhyakālī, Bhadrakālī, Cāmuṇḍākālī, Siddhakālī, Haṃsakālī and Kāmakalākālī. The worship of Kālī had been widely prescribed for the *raṭanti-caturdaśī* day (fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Māgha) by Govindānanda, Śrīnātha, Vācaspati and others. Her worship on the *diwali* day is not mentioned in the earlier works. The oldest reference to it is found in the *Śyāmasaparyāvidhi* of Kāśīnātha composed in the Śaka year 1669. A work called *Tārātantra* is dedicated to Tārā, also known as Nīlā. Eight forms of Tārā are described in the *Māyātantra*, quoted in the *Tantrasāra*, viz. Tārā, Ugrā, Mahogrā, Vajrā, Nīlā, Sarasvatī, Kāmeśvarī and Bhadrakālī. The names of seven and eight Mātṛkās are found in the Tāntric lists of Nāyikās or Yoginis. Such a list is also given in the *Kālikā Purāṇa*.[3] In some of the texts quoted in the *Tantrasāra*, the eight Mātṛkās are brought in relation to the eight Bhairavas. The *Prāṇatosani* quotes a text which gives a list of sixteen Mothers.

In the third quarter of the fourteenth century Shams-i-Shiraj 'Afif mentioned the idol of Jvālāmukhī, which was situated on the road to Nagarkot, and wrote: "Some of the infidels have reported that Sultan Firuz went specially to see this idol and held a g 'den umbrella over its head. . . . Other infidels said

[1] II. 6. 126.
[2] Sircar, *SP*, 48.
[3] LXI. 84.

that Sultan Muhammad Shah bin Tughlak Shah held an umbrella over this same idol; but this also is a lie."[1] Abul Fazl's *Ain-i-Akbari* composed about the end of the sixteenth century, contains an interesting description of the *Pīṭha* near Nagarkot together with the legend about the origin of the four *Pīṭhas* as was known to him. His account is reproduced below: "Nagarkot is a city situated on a hill; its fort is called Kangarh. Near the town is the shrine of Mahāmāyā (a name of the Indian Mother Goddess indicating 'the goddess having great magical power') which is considered as the manifestation of the divinity. Pilgrims from distant parts visit it and obtain their desires. Strange it is that in order that their prayers may be favourably heard, they cut out their tongues; with some it grows again on the spot, with others after one or two days. Although the medical faculty allow the possibility of growth in the tongue, yet in so short space of time it is sufficiently amazing. In the Hindu mythology Mahāmāyā is said to be the wife of Mahādeva, and the learned of this creed represent by this name the energizing power of the deity. It is said that on beholding the disrespect (shown to herself and her husband Śiva) she cut herself to pieces and her body fell in four places; her head and some of her limbs in the northern mountains of Kashmir near Kamraj and these relics are called Śāradā: other parts fell near Bijapur in the Deccan and are known as Tuljā (Turjā Bhavānī). Such portions as reached the eastern quarter near Kāmarūpa are called Kāmākhyā and the remnant that kept its place is celebrated as Jālandharī which is this particular spot. In the vicinity torch-like flames issue from the ground in some places, and others resemble the blaze of lamps. There is a concourse of pilgrims and various things are cast into the flames with the expectation of obtaining temporal blessings. Over them a domed temple has been erected and an astonishing crowd assembles therein. The vulgar impute to miraculous agency what is simply a mine of brimstone."[1]

Abul Fazl thus knew four holy places attributed to the goddess. The first one was Śāradā at modern Sardi in northern Kashmir of which we had occasion to refer from Albīrūnī's

[1] Elliot, *HI*, III, 318

[2] Jerrett's tr. II, 312-14; *cf* Sircar, *SP*, 14.

Kitabul Hind and Kalhaṇa's *Rājataraṅgiṇī*. Abul Fazl has substituted Kashmir for Uḍḍiyāna. The second was Jālandharī near Nagarkot in the Punjab by which he had referred to Jvālāmukhī and not the neighbouring Jālandhara Pīṭha. The third was the Bijapur region, which may be same as Pūrṇagiri mentioned in the Tantras and the *Kālikā Purāṇa*. The shrine of Bhavānī stands at Tuljāpur to the south of Osmanabad. Such was the celebrity of this goddess that when Śivāji built the fort of Pratapgadh, he set up there an image of Bhavānī as the Bhavānī of Tuljāpur was beyond his easy reach.[1] The fourth was Kāmarūpa, the seat of the goddess Kāmākhyā. This goddess was originally of tribal origin, whose name may be traced to the Austric words *Kamoi* (demon), *Kamoit* (devil), Komin (grave), Kamet (corpse in Khasi), *Kamru* (a god of the Santals) etc.[2] Worship of the Mother Goddess was widely prevalent among the tribes of Assam. The Chutiyas, for example, "worshipped various forms of Kālī with the aid, not of Brāhmaṇas, but of their tribal priests or Deoris. The favourite form in which they worshipped this deity was that of Kesai Khāti, 'the eater of raw flesh' to whom human sacrifices were offered. After their subjugation by the Ahoms, the Deoris were permitted to continue their ghastly rites; but they were usually given, for the purpose, criminals who had been sentenced to capital punishment. Failing them, victims were taken from a particular clan, which in return accorded certain privileges. The person selected was fed sumptuously, until he was in sufficiently plump condition to suit the supposed test of the goddess, and he was then decapitated at the Copper Temple at Sadiya, or at some other shrine of the tribe. Human sacrifices were also formerly offered by the Tipperas, Kacharis, Koches, Jaintias and other Assam tribes."[3] "When the new temple of Kāmākhyā was opened, the occasion was celebrated by the immolation of no less than a hundred and forty men, whose heads were offered to the goddess on salvers made of copper. Similar sacrifices were offered to various aboriginal deities. According to the *Haft Iqlim*, there was in Kāmarūpa a class of persons called *Bhogīs*, who were voluntary

[1] Sarkar, *HA*, IV, 32.
[2] Sircar, *SP*, 15.
[3] Gait, *HA*, 56.

victims of a goddess named Ai who dwelt in a cave; from the time when they announced that the goddess had called them, they were treated as privileged persons; they were allowed to do whatever they liked, and every woman was at their command; but when the annual festival came round they were killed."[1]

We have already seen that the *Kālikā Purāṇa* mentions seven *Pīṭhas* or holy resorts of the goddess, while the *Rudrayāmala* mentions ten, the *Kulārṇava Tantra* eighteen and the *Kubjikātantra* forty-two. The *Jñanarṇava Tantra* has two lists of *Pīṭhas*; one containing eight names and another fifty. The second list was taken into account in the *Tantrasāra* which was composed about the seventeenth century. The Śākta *Pīṭhas* had become a popular theme of the medieval writers, many of whom took the greatest liberty in fabricating the place names, the goddesses and their Bhairavas. The association of a holy place with one of Satī's limbs was determined usually by their individual imagination. This is clearly demonstrated by the sixteenth century Bengali poet Mukundarāma in the *Dakṣa-yajña-bhaṅga* section of his *Caṇḍī-maṅgala.* A list of fifty-one *Pīṭhas* is found in the *Pīthanirṇaya* or *Mahāpīṭhanirūpaṇa* section of the *Tantracuḍāmaṇī* composed about the closing years of the seventeenth century. It has been quoted in such modern works as the *Prāṇatoṣaṇī Tantra* (1820), the *Śabdakalpadruma* (1822-52) and others and appears to have been used by Bhāratacandra in his *Annadāmaṅgala* (1752) and modified by the author of the *Śivacarita.*

Various texts of the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* have been edited by Prof. D.C. Sircar in his *Śākta Pīṭhas* in which the names of the *Pīṭhas*, the Pīṭha-devatās (forms of the goddess), the Kṣetrādhīśas (Bhairavas) and the Devī's *aṅga-pratyaṅga* (limbs including ornaments etc.) have been arranged in tabular forms, and the discrepancies that concern them are also indicated. Here we shall not reproduce the dull lists. We shall only touch upon the important ones. In fact, in this vast country, holy resorts of the goddess are innumerable and the popularity of her cult is proved even in the place-names of India. Referring to the Panjab region Prof. Niharranjan Ray observed: "Very few people pause to consider this social phenomenon, or to consider the significance of such toponyms in these regions as, for instance,

[1] *Ibid*, 58.

Ambala which is derived from Amba, one of the many names of Durgā, Chandigarh which is named after Caṇḍī, Panchkula (a growing village between Kalka and Chandigarh), a technical term of unmistakable Tāntric significance, Kalka which is vulgarisation of Kālikā, Simla which is Śyāmalā Devī in its anglicised version. A careful and close look at the postal directories of the Punjab, Hariyana and Himachal would yield a long list of such toponyms from which one may draw one's own conclusion. Besides, throughout these regions one still finds a countless number of small, lowly shrines with all but shapeless of crude form placed on their altars, which worshippers, lowly village folks, describe as Manasā, Caṇḍī, Kālī, Naynā, Durgā, etc. . . ."[1]

The important feature of the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, cited above, is that its list of the *Pīṭhas* together with the names of the Devī and the Bhairava, includes a number of places in the rural areas of Bengal. Thus, the *Pīṭha* of Sugandhā, where the presiding goddess is Sunandā, is located at Shikarpur near Barisal; that of Vaidyanātha, where the goddess is Jayadurgā, at the Deoghar-Vaidyanathdham in the Santal Parganas district; that of Bahulā where the goddess is also of the same name, at Ketugrama near Katwa in the Burdwan district; that of Ujjayinī, where the goddess is Maṅgalā or Maṅgalacaṇḍī, at Ujanī or Kogram in the Burdwan district; that of Caṭṭala, where the goddess is Bhavānī, at the Sītākuṇḍa on the Chandranath hill in the Chittagong district; that of Tripurā, where the goddess is Tripura or Tripurasundarī, at Radhakishorepur in the Tripura state; that of Trisrotā where the goddess is Bhrāmarī or Amarī, at Salbari in the Jalpaiguri district; that of Yugādyā, where the goddess is of the same name, at Khirgram near Katwa in the Burdwan district; that of Kālīpīṭha, where the goddess is Kālī, at Kālighat in the southern suburb of Calcutta; that of Kirīṭa or Kirīṭakona, where the goddess is Bhuvaneśī or Vimalā, at Vatanagar near Lalbag in the Murshidabad district; that of Karatoyā, where the goddess is Aparṇā, at Bhavanipur in the Bogra district; that of Vibhāsa, where the goddess is Bhīmarūpā, near Tamluk in the Midnapur district; that of Nalahāṭi, where the goddess is Kālikā, at Nalhāṭi in the Birbhum district; that of

[1] *SGSS*, 27.

Vakreśvara, where the goddess is Mahiṣamardinī, at Bakreswar in the Birbhum district; that of Yaśora, where the goddess is Yośoreśvarī, at Iswaripur in the Khulna district; that of Aṭṭahāsa, where the goddess is Phullarā, near Labhpur in the Birbhum district; and that of Nandipura, where the goddess is Nandinī, near Sainthia in the Birbhum district.

The history of the literature on the *Pīṭhas* no doubt points unmistakably to the great contribution Bengal must have made to the Tāntric culture in the medieval period. But the greatest centre of Tāntricism seems to have originally been in North-Western India, although in the late medieval age its importance had been diminished. Both Jvālāmukhī and Jālandhara, where the goddesses are Siddhidā or Ambikā and Tripuramālinī respectively, are mentioned in the list of the *Pīṭhas*, the former lying in the Kangra district of Panjab. The latter, although it is the chief city of the Jullundhur district, is located near the former. The *Pīṭha* of Hiṅgulā, where the goddess is known as Koṭṭarī, Koṭṭavī or Koṭṭarīśa (meaning a naked woman) is modern Hinglaj in Baluchistan. The goddess is locally known as Bibi Nānī, probably the same as Nana of the Kushan coins. The *Pīṭha* or Śarkarāra, where the goddess is Mahiṣamardinī, may stand for modern Sukkur, the chief city of the district of that name in Sind. According to the *Pīṭhanirṇaya*, the goddess is known as Mahāmāyā in Kashmir but, strangely enough, as there is no reference to the celebrated Śāradā (Sardi) and Amaranatha *tīrthas* of Kashmir, there seems to be a fantastic element in the description of this *Pīṭha*. Likewise, the non-mention of Pasupatinātha, the most celebrated deity of Nepal, in this context seems to explore the imaginary character of the description, despite the mention of Nepāla as a *Pīṭha* and Mahāmāya as its presiding goddess. The *Pīṭha* of Mānasa, where the goddess is Dākṣāyaṇī, may be located near the source of the Sutlej while that of Pañcasāgara, where the goddess is Vārāhī, to the five *Kuṇḍas* near Hardwar.

Of other *Pīṭhas*, the aforesaid text mentions Ujjayinī and Mālava, but it should be noted that the celebrated god Mahākāla is not referred to as Bhairava in connexion either with the former or with the latter. Rāmagiri (modern Ramtek near Nagpur) is mentioned with Śivānī as its presiding deity. Lalitā and Viśālakṣī, the presiding goddess of the Pīṭhas of

Prayāga and Vārāṇasī, seem to be adaptations from the earlier purāṇic lists. The same holds good in the case of the goddess Sāvitrī of Kurukṣetra. At Utkala, the goddess is Vimalā and her Bhairava is Jagannātha. It is interesting to note that the cult of the latter, who is evidently a Vaiṣṇava deity, is marked by some important Śākta-Tāntric rites. The Śākta claim on the Vaiṣṇava *tīrthas* is also proved by the fact that Vṛndāvana, the celebrated Vaiṣṇava tirtha, is described as the original resort of the goddess Umā. The *Pīṭha* of Gaṇḍakī, where the goddess is Gaṇḍakī, Caṇḍī is located at Sālagrāma at the source of the Gaṇḍak, and that of Mithila ,where she is Umā, at Janakpur in the Nepalese Tarai.

The *Pīṭha* of Kāmagiri, where the goddess is Kāmākhyā, is Kāmarūpa to which reference has already been made. According to the *Kāmākhyātantra*, the goddess is worshipped in five different forms—Kāmākhyā, Tripurā, Kāmeśvarī, Śāradā and Mahāmāyā. There is no image in her temple; only a Yoni-shaped stone, smeared with vermilion, is set up to represent the goddess. The worship of this goddess is said to have been introduced by the Asura Naraka, the king of Kāmarūpa. However, in the first quarter of the sixteenth century when Kāmarūpa was occupied by the Koch king Viśvasiṃha, an attempt was made to revive the ancient Kāmākhyā cult. The present temple was built in 1565 during the reign of his son Naranārāyaṇa alias Malladeva. A century later the Ahom kings who conquered the eastern zones of Kāmarūpa took the charge of her worship. According to the popular tradition, king Naranārāyaṇa employed a Brāhmaṇa named Kendukalāi as her priest and the goddess was so pleased with his worship that she used to dance before him assuming the form of a beautiful damsel. The king bribed Kendukalāi and saw her dance. At this the goddess punished the king and cut off the head of Kendukalāi. There is an Assamese proverb: *Kendukalāir murchigār dare mur chingim.* A similar legend centering round the goddess Artemis is found in Greek mythology.

Of other seats of the goddess in Eastern India, reference must be made to the *Pīṭha* of Jayantī where the goddess is also of the same name. The *Pīṭha* is located at Kalajor-Baurbhog in the Sylhet district. "There is a spot in the Faljur Pargana where part of Satī's left leg is said to have fallen and where human

victims were immolated yearly on the ninth day (mahānavamī) of the Durgā pūja. Similar sacrifices were also offered on special occasions, such as birth of a son in the royal family, or the fulfilment of some request made to the gods. Frequently the victims were self-chosen, in which case, for some time previous to the sacrifice, they enjoyed the privilege of doing whatever they pleased without let or hindrance."[1] The *Pīṭha* of Kaynāśrama, where the goddess is Sarvāṇī, is located at Kumārīkuṇḍa in the Chittagong district and that of Maṇivedaka, where she is Gāyatrī, somewhere in Maṇipura.

Of the *Pīṭhas* of the Deccan and South India, the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* refers to Janasthāna and Godāvarītīra with Bhrāmarī and Viśveśī as the presiding goddesses. Śriśaila and Śriparvata (in the Nallamalur range to the south of the Krishna) are separately mentioned, but the non-mention of Mallikarjuna (Śiva) and of Devī Bhramarāmbā on the Śriśaila shows that the description is imaginary. That the writer of the *Pīṭhanirṇaya* had absolutely no idea of South India is also proved by the non-mention of the celebrated Kāmākṣī of Kāñcī, although Kāñcī is mentioned as a Pīṭha with its presiding goddess Devagarbhā.

Here we like to say a few words about the goddess Kāmākṣī of Kāñcī. The Malabar legends as found in the *Kāḷikarpam* and the *Bhadrotpatti* associate her with the slaying of an Asura called Daruka.[2] In the *Lalito-pākhyāna* of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* she is identified with Mahālakṣmī, and according to the Tamil tradition, Pārvatī, having committed a sin by covering the eyes of Śiva, an act by which the universe was going to be perished, made a penance for six months on the bank of the Kampā at Kāñcipura, and since then the people of that region began to worship her as Kāmākṣī. According to another tradition this goddess was very blood-thirsty, but she changed her habit thanks to the efforts of Saṇkarācārya. A dumb (Mūka) poet was said to have been gifted with the power of speech or poetic imagination by the grace of the goddess. He composed a poetical work, known as *Mūka Pañcasatī* or *Devī Pañcaśatī*, in praise of the goddess.

The most popular goddess of South India in the late-medieval period was Mīṇākṣī. Her original temple was built in the early

[1] Gait, *HA*, 268.
[2] Menon in *SKACV*, 234-39.

medieval age which was destroyed by Malik Kafur, the general of Alauddin Khalji. It was rebuilt by Tirumala Naik (1623-59). The city of Madura is, in fact, the city of this goddess. The immense precincts of the present Mīṇākṣī temple are dominated by nine exquisitely carved *gopurams*, the tallest of which is 152 ft. high. There are many popular legends about Mīṇakṣī, one of which has a close bearing on the *Śilappadikāram* story.[1]

In view of what we have stated above, we get a fair idea about late-medieval Śāktism. The picture will become more clear if side by side the Śākta-Tāntric authors and their works are taken into account. It is, however, not possible to give anything like a comprehensive account of the extensive literature produced by writers hailing from all parts of the country at different times over a long period. Of the earlier Tāntric works, we have already occasion to refer to those attributed to Saṅkarācārya, the *Tantrāloka* of the Kashmirian scholar Abhinavagupta and the *Śāradātilaka* of Lakṣmaṇa Deśika. A host of Tāntric saints and authors flourished in Bengal during the late-medieval age. Mahāmahopādhyāya Parivrājakācārya, whose first name is still unknown, was one of the earliest Bengali writers on the Tantras whose *Kāmyayantroddhāra* was probably composed about the fourteenth century AD. Lakṣmīdhara, one of the court poets of Pratāparudra Gajapati of Orissa (1497-1539), commented on the *Saundaryalaharī*, attributed to Śaṅkara, and his commentary contain valuable information on the manifestations of Śakti. Brahmānandagiri's *Śāktānandataraṅgiṇī*, dealing with various rites to be performed in connexion with the worship of Śakti *Tārārahasya*, dealing with the worship of Tārā in her various forms, were composed in the sixteenth century. His disciple Pūrṇānanda was the celebrated author of such Śākta-Tāntric works as the *Śāktakarma*, *Śrītattvacintāmaṇi*, *Śyāmārahasya*, *Tattvānandataraṅgiṇī*, *Ṣaṭkarmollāsa*, etc. Mahīdhara's *Mantramahodadhi* was composed in 1589 AD. Mahīdhara was an inhabitant of Ahicchatra' (modrn Ramnagar in Bareilly district) who later settled at Varanasi. The *Puraścaraṇadīpikā* and *Kulapūjanacandrikā* of Candrasekhara were also composed about the sixteenth century. Śaṅkara of Gauḍa, whose full name seems to have been

[1] Whitehead, *VGSI*, 112 ff.

Śaṅkara Āgamācārya, composed his *Tārārahasya-Vṛittikā* about the beginning of the seventeenth century. To the same period belonged the great *Tantrasāra* of Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamavāgīśa which is the most comprehensive and popular of the numerous digests that are known in Bengal. A few manuscripts of this work are found in non-Bengali scripts, and outside Bengal, indicating thereby the extent of its popularity. Towards the end of the seventeenth century Raghunātha Tarkavāgīśa of Andul near Calcutta composed his *Āgamatantravilāsa* which was abridged by his son Rāmakṛṣṇa. Śrīnivāsa Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmin of this period, who was originally a South Indian, was the celebrated author of the *Śivārcanasaṃhitā*, *Caṇḍisaparyākramakalpavallī* and other works. Of the seventeenth century writers, reference should also be made to Navasiṃha alias Ādyānandana of Nepal who was the famous author of the *Tantracintāmaṇi*, *Kulamuktikallolinī*, *Puṣparatnākaratantra* and other works.[1]

More important in this respect is the evidence furnished by the regional literatures. We have seen that during the late medieval period Śāktism had become a social outlook. Its spirit was not confined within the limit of a single religion. Those who did not call themselves Śāktas, peoples belonging to different religious sects, did not hesitate even to propagate the spirit of Śāktism which they adopted ideologically as a means to serve some social purpose. As for example, Guru Govind Singh, the tenth *guru* of the Sikhs, composed the *Caṇḍī-di-vār* which shows that the spirit of Śāktism animated his imagination, although his religious theories and practices were different from those of Śāktism. There is no reason to believe that Guru Govind Singh had personally come to acquire any faith in Caṇḍī or Durgā, but since Śāktism was a provocating social atmosphere, he seems to have accepted it as a fact of contemporary life and used it to his advantage. His compositions of more than a couple of pieces on Caṇḍī and Durgā can be explained by the fact that the need of the community in his time was indeed *Śakti* or power and energy against the imperial persecution of the Mughuls.[2] The same was probably the inspiration of the poets and *cāraṇas* of

[1] Chakravarty, *TSTRL*, 66-79.
[2] Ray, *SGSS*, 28-30.

Rajasthan who composed verses and songs in praise of Mahiṣāsuramardinī, Kālī, Cāmuṇḍā, Mātāji, Karṇimātā, Naganeejī and others. A very large number of Rajasthani manuscripts, now in the Anup Sanskrit Library, Bikaner, mostly illustrated, give us sufficient proof of this. Folk songs written by Moonkhan Mev of Alwar and Jaichand Yati show that even Muslims and Jains worshipped Śakti or composed verses in her praise.[1] It is interesting to note that in some parts of India, among the Muslim community, the cult of Ālī and Fatimā, as the male and female principles, is in vogue. In some areas of Uttar Pradesh Āminā Satī, the deified mother of the Prophet, is worshipped, while among some matriarchal tribes of Baluchistan it is believed that the mother of Muhammad was really the Prophet. Village Mothers, like the smallpox goddess, the serpent goddess, etc. are worshipped by the Muslim peasants as well. In Lower Bengal, the Muslims still worship Vanabibi, the presiding goddess of the Sundarban region, whose exploits are dealt with in a poetical work called *Vanabibir Jahurānāmā* written by Munshi Bayanuddin.

In the *Pṛthvirāj Rāso* of Chand Bardai, one of the most popular works of Hindi literature, the goddess is invoked in many places in the forms of Caṇḍī, Cāmuṇḍā and Kālī. Here she is described as the saviour of the world whenever it is oppressed by the demons. Even a Śākta background we can trace in the *Rāmacaritamānasa* of Tulasīdāsa in which the speaker is Śiva and the hearer is Devī. Many of the Devī legends are incorporated in the *Rāmacaritamānasa*. Tulasīdāsa's Sītā was a worshipper of Gaurī by whose grace she had Rāma as her husband. Tulasīdāsa also composed a separate work entitled *Pārvatī-maṅgala* which was inspired on the one hand by the *Kumārasambhāva* of Kālidāsa and on the other by the Maṅgala Kāvyas of Bengal. His *Vinaya Patrikā* contains two hymns dedicated to the goddess. Although Kabir did not favour Śāktism, a few of his verses reflect the concept of Māyā as the material cause of the universe. The same is also found in the verses of Dādū. The goddess Vindhyavāsinī of Mirzapur is an interesting figure in popular Hindi literature to whom is dedicated a type of poems called *cālīsā*, each consisting of forty verses. Apart from this

[1] Majumdar in *SCT*, 99-100.

Vindhyeśvarī-cālisā other folk songs in praise of the goddess are found, a good number of which have been collected by Ahlad Misra. Subsequently *Durgā-cālīsās* and *Śakti-cālīsās* came into vogue, and these were recited during the worship of the goddess. In modern Hindi literature, however, as we shall see in the next chapter, the role of Śāktism has become more significant.[1]

Mithilā was a prominent centre of Śāktism, as is proved by the existence of a number of śākta holy places like Uccaiṭha, Caṇḍikāsthāna, Ugratārāsthāna, Cāmuṇḍāsthāna, Janakpur, etc. In Maithili literature numerous poems were composed in praise of Śiva and Devī and these were mainly concerned with the marriage of Śiva and Pārvatī, their married life and family life. The celebrated poet, Vidyāpati was also included among the writers of such poems. Locana's *Rāgataraṇginī* contains a number of devotional songs dedicated to the goddess Kālī. In Nepal, Bhupatīndra Malla composed more than fifty Śākta songs in Maithili which form the subject matter of his *Bhāṣā-saṅgīta*. A good number of dramas, centering round the Śivā-Śakti theme, were composed in Maithili. Of such works reference should be made to Jagajyotirmalla's *Hara-Gaurī Vivāha* (1629 AD), Jitamitramalla's *Bhāratanāṭakam*, Vaṃśamaṇi Jhā's *Gītadigambara* (1655 AD), Lāla Kavi's *Gaurī-Svayamvara*, Śivadatta's *Gaurī-pariṇaya*, Kānhārām Dāsa's *Gaurī-Svayamvara*, etc., all of which deal with the theme of Śiva's marriage with the Devī. The aforesaid works were evidently inspired by Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* and also partly by Vāmana Bhaṭṭa. Bāṇa's *Pārvatī-pariṇaya* which was a medieval dramatization of the former. Lāla Dāsa's *Sāṅga Durgā Prakāśikā* is a Maithili translation of the *Devīmāhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. Guṇavantalāl Dāsa composed his *Gaurī-pariṇaya-prabandha* on the basis of the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa*. Riddhinātha Jhā's *Sati Bhibhuti* and Gaṇeśvara Jhā's *Devī Gītā* are also important Maithili contribution to the Śakti cult.

The temple chronicle of Orissa. The *Mādala Pāñjī*, gives some important information regarding the functioning of Śakti cult in that region. It gives details of the cult of the Seven Mothers whose images were installed by Bhīmakeśara (Bhīmaratha of the Somavaṃśī dynasty) who was a great worshipper of

[1] Dasgupta, *BSSSS*, 383 ff.

the Devī. The *Pāñjī* also mentions the construction of the Sāmālāi temple of Sambalpur by one Yadukeśarī. In Oriya literature Saralā Dāsa's *Caṇḍī Purāṇa* is a remarkable production which deals with the exploits of the Devī. It is a nice admixture of the Purānic and popular legends, and what is more, it gives a very useful account of the local goddesses of Orissa, who were regarded as the manifestations of the great Devī. In his *Bilaṅkā Rāmāyaṇa*, the same poet identifies Sītā with the great goddess who killed the hundred-thousand headed Rāvaṇa. His *Mahābhārata* has also a Śākta background, in the preface of which he says that he had undertaken the task of its composition by the command and grace of Sāralā Devī. Besides his chosen deity Sāralā, his *Mahābhāratā* deals with such goddesses as Ugratārā Cāceśvari, Bāseli, Māheśvarī, Kālikā, Kaṅkālī, Ahimukhi, Jambuki, etc. Jagannātha Dāsa, the sixteenth century poet famous for his translation of the *Bhāgavata*, also composed a work on Śaiva-Śākta doctrine. This work came to be known as *Tulabhina*. In the *Bāta Abauāṣa* of Balarāma *Dāsa* (sixteenth century), Lord Jagannātha is described as being attended upon by sixty-four Yoginīs, Kātyāyanīs, Sapta Mātṛkā, Vimalā and Virajā. The work also mentions seventy-six local goddesses identified with different aspects of Śakti. The *Prācimāhātmya* of Dvija Trilocana mentions deities like Caṇḍaghaṇṭā, Rāma-Caṇḍī, Bhagavatī, etc. The Orissa State Museum contains several Tāntric manuscripts, and in this context reference may be made to Jagannātha Ācārya's *Durgayajñadīpika*, Keśava Ratha's *Tariṇīkulasudhataraṅgiṇī*, Godāvara Misra's *Sāradarcanapaddhati* and Raghunātha Dāsa's *Vanadurgāpūja*.

The post-Caitanya revival of Vaiṣṇavism in Orissa was not very favourable for the growth of Śākta literature. In Assam also a similar phenomenon came into existence owing to the advent of Śaṅkaradeva (1449-1568), the great Vaiṣṇava saint and the founder of Assamese literature. Although Assam was a stronghold of Śaktism, the neo-Vaiṣṇava movement, launched by Śaṅkaradeva, could restrict the scope of Śāktism in the field of literature. Of the literary works dealing with the domestic life of Śiva and Pārvatī, reference must be made to Rāmasarasvatī's *Bhīmacarita* (fifteenth-sixteenth century) in which Bhīma of the Great Epic is brought in relation to the domestic life of Śiva and Pārvatī. The cult of Manasā was popular in Assam and we

know of three *Manasāmaṅgalas* (poems in praise of the goddess Manasā) composed respectively by Manakara, Durgāvara and Sukanāni between the fifteenth and the seventeenth centuries. Towards the close of the seventeenth century Rucinātha and Raṅganātha translated the *Devīmāhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* in Assamese. Ananta Ācārya's *Anandalaharī*, composed about the same period, was an adaptation of the famous *Ānāndalaharī* or *Saundaryalaharī* attributed to Śaṅkara.

In Bengali literature, *Rāmāyaṇa* of Kṛttivāsa (fifteenth century AD) contains the story of Rāma's Durgā worship before his final encounter with Rāvaṇa. Its purpose was simply to give an emotional satisfaction to the peoples of the goddess cult. In regional literatures numerous such stories are found in which the success of the hero was dependent upon the grace of the goddess. It is interesting to note that in the *Adbhūta Rāmāyaṇa*,[1] a late work highly favoured by the Kashmirian Śāktās, Sita is stated to have killed Rāvaṇa assuming the form of Kālī. The said work identifies Sītā with the supreme being of the Śāktas. The attempt of associating Śāktism with the Rāma-Sītā legends may be traced even to the Sanskrit *Rāmacarita* of Abhinanda which is a work of the tenth century. This tradition was later adopted by the later *Rāmāyāṇa* writers. In Sāralā Dāsa's Oriya *Rāmāyaṇa*, which has been mentioned in the preceding section, the tradition of the *Adbhūta Rāmāyaṇa* is followed in which Sītā herself killed Rāvaṇa in the form of Bhadrakālī. The story of the slaying of Rāvaṇa by Sītā is also found in the *Jaiminibhārata* and other later Bengali *Rāmāyaṇas*. According to the popular Rāma legends of the Mathura region it was Sītā who killed Rāvaṇa, and having accomplished the task went straight to Calcutta instead of Ayodhyā and settled there permanently as Kālī Māi.

The story of Behulā and Lakhindar, the adventures of Lausena, the story of the merchant Dhanapati and his son Śrīmanta, and of Kālaketu and Phullarā were current in popular narrative poems, and these formed the nucleus of the great *Maṅgalakāvyas* which became established in Bengal by 1600. The purpose of these *Maṅgalakāvyās* was to popularise the cults of the lower goddesses among the higher section of the peoples and to iden-

[1] XXV. 29-31.

tify them with different manifestations of the Śākta Devī. Thus, the *Manasā-maṅgalas* (composed at different times by Kānā Haridatta, Vijaya Gupta, Vipradāsa Piplāi, Ketakādāsa Kṣemānanda, etc.) were attempts to popularise the cult of the snake-goddess Manasā. Chand Sadagār, a rich merchant and an influential person in society, who was a devotee of Śiva, was unwilling to worship Manasā as a goddess, and hence Manasā was not getting social recognition. The goddess thereafter, following the most unscrupulous and unfair methods, compelled the Sadāgar to worship her and to regard her as the manifestation of the great Śakti, the consort of Śiva. Likewise Kṛṣṇarāma's *Ṣaṣṭhīmaṅgala*, *Śītalāmaṅgala* and *Kamalāmaṅgala* show that even such minor goddesses as Ṣaṣṭhī, Śītalā and Kamalā also came to be identified with the supreme being of the Śaktas.

More important in this respect are the *Caṇḍīmaṅgalas*. The goddess whom we meet in these poems is Maṅgalacaṇḍī. Here two goddesses are merged in one, the Caṇḍī of the Purāṇas and the local goddess Maṅgalā who was worshipped by the females on every Tuesday. In the *Caṇḍīmaṅgalas* the demon-slayer form of the goddess is absent (although in a later work called *Abhaya-maṅgala* of Dvija Rāmadeva we have the story of her killing a demon called Maṅgala). She is usually depicted as a goddess who bestows wealth and happiness upon her worshippers, but if anyone offends her she takes terrible revenge. Of the writers of the *Caṇḍimaṅgalas*, Dvija Mādhava and Mukundarāma Cakravartī are most important, both of whom flourished in the sixteenth century. The latter was really a great poet in whose work we come across a touch of realism and a critical description of the social life of sixteenth century Bengal. The *Caṇḍīmaṅgalas* contain two legends, one of which describes how Kālaketu, a hunter by profession who belonged to the lowest stratum of society, became king of Gujarat by the grace of the goddess Caṇḍī. The other legend deals with the fate of a merchant called Dhanapati who was going to be ruined for his disregard to the goddess. But he regained his fortune for one of his wives who was a devotee of Maṅgalacaṇḍī. A third legend describes her Kamalākāminī form, the goddess swallowing an elephant and taking it out once again from her mouth, which was seen by Dhanapati and his son Śrīmanta. In Mukundarāma's *Caṇḍīmaṅgala* we come across details of Śakti worship including the legends of Dakṣa's sacrifice

and of Satī's death, the conception of ten Mahāvidyās, the tradition of the Pīṭhas and other allied subjects, and side by side, in such works is depicted the human form of the Devī, the sorrows and joys of her domestic life with her poor old husband Śiva, who does not know how to earn, and a lot of children always crying for food. The goddess is conceived of as a young lady who, according to the custom of the land, has been married at an early age and taken away from her parents to the house of her husband, whence she visits her paternal home only occasionally. This human conception of the Devī and her impoverished household has further been elaborated in works like Rāmeśvara's *Śivāyaṇa* and in the later Śākta lyrics.

8

MODERN ŚĀKTISM
(From 1700 AD)

The disintegration and downfall of the Mughal empire and the rise of new social forces once again brought some fundamental changes in the religious outlook of the people. During the Mughal rule the Hindu and Muslim inhabitants of India came in close touch with each other, and a spirit of tolerance prevailed. The Grand Mughals, excepting Akbar, were devout Sunni Muslims, and their attitude towards the Hindus was obviously hostile, but the extent of this hostility was limited, as a result of which the Hindus felt themselves more or less safe in the Mughal regime.

But the situation changed, all on a sudden, with the accession of Aurangzeb on the Mughal throne. The fanatic Islamism of this monarch which was revealed in his religious policy, especially his enemy-like attitude towards the Hindus, contributed a lot to the downfall of the Mughal empire, as is known to all students of Indian history. But a side-issue of this religious policy was equally important and that was Hindu revivalism. This revivalism took place under the leadership of the Marathas. The Sikhs of Punjab had by this time appeared as an anti-Muslim militant nation. The followers of the saint tradition were persecuted by Aurangzeb, and they had also taken an anti-Muslim stand. After the death of Aurangzeb when the great Mughal empire survived in name only, the local chiefs began to rule almost independently. Many of them were Hindus who now took active part in the restoration of the so-called Hindu way of life.

Evidently in such an atmosphere the role of the Śakti cult was

very important. We have seen that Guru Govind Singh's insistence on the doctrine of Śakti was not due to his inclination towards Śāktism as a religion, but to his understanding of the spirit of Śāktism in terms of the cult of power which the Sikh society needed for its consolidation. The same spirit was shared by Śivaji whose favourite goddess Bhavānī also symbolised that power which the Marathas needed for their struggle against the Mughals. Thus side by side with the benign conceptions of the goddess, as is found in the Śākta lyrics, her conception as the embodiment of all power, the revival of her demon-killing form, came into prominence during the period that followed from the disintegration of the Mughal empire to the consolidation of the British rule in India. Mahārāja Kṛṣṇachandra of Nadia (eighteenth century), we are told, ordered all his subjects to perform the worship of Kālī on threat of punishment. Many of the local rebellions that took place immediately after the establishment of the British rule, e.g. the Sannyasi rebellion, the Chuar rebellion, etc. were inspired by the name of Kālī. Even the robbers and dacoits worshipped this goddess for power and success. The period which marked the transition from late-medieval to modern was characterised, especially in Bengal, by the installation of numerous Śakti temples mainly dedicated to the goddess Kālī. Of her different forms, current in Bengal, we have Dakṣiṇākālī, Siddhakālī, Guhyakālī, Bhadrakālī, Śmaśānakālī, and Rakṣākālī or Mahākālī.[1] Often Śiva shrines, generally twelve in number, were constructed within the compound of the Śakti temple.

The philosophical consequence of this new social role of Śāktism was the emergence of some outstanding contributors to Śākta philosophy like Bhāskararāya of South India or Nīlakaṇṭha of Mahārāṣṭra. Bhāskararāya's *Setubandha* is a significant commentary on the *Nityāṣoḍaśikārṇava* section of the *Vāmakeśvaratantra*. Of his other works dealing with the Tantra topics the outstanding ones are the *Saubhāgyabhāśkara*, which is a commentary on the *Lalitāsahasranāma* section of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* and the *Guptvatī* which is a commentary on the *Devīmāhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa*. His *Varivasvāra-*

[1] For different forms of Kālī see *Kālītantra*, I. 27ff. etc. quoted in the *Tantrasāra*, and also *Śyāmārahasya*, VI. 15ff.

hasya is an independent work which explains different aspects of the Tāntric worship of Śakti. Bhāskara flourished in the first-half of the eighteenth century. Among his distinguished disciples, Nityānandanātha is also famous for his important work *Nityotsava*. Nīlakaṇṭha of Mahārāṣṭra, who flourished about the middle of the eighteenth century, commented upon the *Devībhāgavata* and the *Kātyayānītantra* and also composed two independent works, *Śāktitattvavimarśinī* and *Kāmakalārahasya*. Of other Tāntric works of the eighteenth century mention may be made of Ramagopal Śarman's *Tantradīpanī*, Kāśīnātha Tarkālaṅkāra's *Śyāmasaparyāvidhi*, Kesava Viśvarūpa's *Āgamatattvasaṃgraha* and Premanidhi Pantha's *Mallādarśā*, *Dīpaprakāśā*, *Pṛthivīpremodaya*, *Jagatpremodaya*, *Prayogaratnākara*, etc.

The traditional seventy-seven Āgamas belonging to the Śakti cult are divided into five *subhāgamas* which teach practices leading to knowledge and liberation, sixty-four *kaulāgamas* which teach practices intended to develop magical powers, and eight *miśrāgamas* which aim at both, Śiva and Śakti stand in the Tantras in relation of *Prakāśa* and *Vimarśa* respectively, the former quality *(prakāśa)* being of the nature of pure consciousness, impersonality and inactivity. Bhāskararāya in his commentary on the *Lalitāsahasranāma* defines *vimarśa* as the spontaneous vibration of the *prakāśa*, the power which gives rise to the world of distinctions but which remains latent in the absolute. The potentiality of the whole object-world exists as the *Vīmarśa* or Śakti. Prakṛti or Māyā is looked upon as the substance of Śakti under whose direction it evolves into the several material elements and physical portions of all sentient beings. Instead of the twenty-five *tattvas* of the Sāṅkhya, we have thirty-six, classed into Śivatattva or the absolute, Vidyātattva or the subtle manifestations of Śakti and Ātmatattva or the material universe from Māyā down to the earth. The individual, under the influence of Māyā, looks upon himself as a free agent and enjoyer, and it is only the knowledge of Śakti that leads him to the way of liberation. Jīvanmukti, or liberation in this life is admitted which depends on self-culture, on the awakening of forces within the organism. The theories of *Karma*, rebirth, gross and subtle bodies, etc. are also accepted by the Śākta thinkers. The Tantras make no distinction of caste and sex and regard all women as manifestations of Śakti. A special moder-

nism in outlook is found in the *Mahānirvānatantra* which seems to heve been composed by *Hariharānanda*, the teacher of Raja Rammohan Roy, probably with the object of upholding the reformist views of the latter.

In the eighteenth century Bengal, although numerous Tāntric works were composed and numerous Śakti temples were constructed, it was the human and domestic form of the goddess that took the lead. The tradition of the homely and benign conception of Śakti was continued in the *Annadāmangala* of *Bhāratacandra*. Following the same tradition Rāmaprasād Sen composed the *Kalikāmangala*, but it was especially his songs, the real Śākta lyrics, that opened not only a new horizon of the Śakti cult but made it acceptable to all, irrespective of caste and creed. The relation between the deity and the worshipper is reflected in these songs as that between the mother and the child. These songs have a firm hold on the people of Bengal and have inspired many poets to compose hundreds of similar songs, of which a good many are known. The great autumnal festival of the goddess, which is in reality the cult of the demon-slaying form of Durgā, roused a different feeling in the Bengali mind. The eternal mother is also the eternal daughter, and hence, in spite of her Mahiṣamardinī cult-form, she is the ordinary Bengali girl, married at an early age with an unemployed and poor old man of unsocial habits, who comes in her parent's house only for three days. The mother longs for the daughter throughout the year and this feeling is expressed in the *āgamani* (welcome) songs. The *vijayā* (farewell) songs likewise reveal the pathos of the tormented heart of the mother when the daughter returns to her husband's household. Of the later writers, of the Śākta Lyrics reference may be made to Dāsarathi Ray, Kamalākānta Bhaṭṭācharyya, Kālī Mirzā, Narachandra Ray, Rasik Chandra Ray and a host of poets including even a few Muslims.[1] Eminent writers of the nineteenth century like Iswarchandra Gupta, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Nabin Chandra

[2] In Bengali there are many works on the Śākta lyrics. A collection of the Śākta lyrics has been published by the Calcutta University. They have been introduced to the English-reading persons by Thompson and Spencer who translated and classified a select number of these songs under the title *Bengali Religious Lyrics: Śākta*.

Sen, and others also composed a good number of Śākta lyrics, rich in literary qualities. Michael Madhusudan Dutta's *vijayā* is one of the best poems of Bengali literature. The Śākta lyrists also popularised the intricate teachings of the Tantras. We may refer in this connexion to Kamalākānta's *Sādhakarañjana* which elucidates in simple Bengali verses the basic principles of the Tantras. The tradition of the *Maṅgalakāvyas* was maintained and even improved by the nineteenth century romantic poet Biharilal Chakravarti in his *Sārdāmaṅgala*, in which Sāradā, the chosen deity of his imagination is depicted as source and spring of all the potentialities of nature.

With the establishment of British rule in India, the English-educated persons, bewildered by the achievements of the British, lost faith in the potency of the age-old traditions of India. They came under the sway of an exotic civilization, of the European ideas and of Christianity. This came as a challenge to those who believed in the traditional values, customs and institutions. This cultural conflict led to a synthesis which was accelerated by the reform movements, the earliest of which was the Brahmo Samāj founded in 1828 by Raja Rammohan Ray, who based his religious doctrines upon the Upaniṣads and built up a lofty monotheistic creed that could easily vie with the Unitarian Christian faith. The Brahmo Samāj worked for the emancipation of women and for the abolition of the caste system, and also by introducing a Church-system it could stop the wild craze of the young intelligentsia for changing their religion. The Prārthanā Samāj of Maharashtra, founded in the sixties of the nineteenth century, put in substantial service in the same direction through the efforts of R.G. Bhandarkar and M.G. Ranade. In the seventies of the nineteenth century, the Ārya Samāj movement was launched by Svāmī Dayānanda who stood for the revival of the ancient Vedic religion. In different parts of Northern India, especially in the Panjab, the Ārya Samāj movement found a good following. Another religious movement which came from abroad could also check, to a certain extent, the influence of Christianity. This was the theosophical movement.

But since all these reform movements were confined only among the English-educated intelligentsia, they had very little access among the greater section of the people. The pride of modern

education among the followers of these new creeds created a gulf of difference between them and the ordinary people who were still living in the midst of poverty and superstitions and did adhere strictly to their old creeds, remaining suspicious of the highbrows coming to convert them. Existing Hinduism became debased for the lack of proper leadership and for the apathy of the intelligentsia towards it. The orthodox section, rightly or wrongly, chose to stand or fall with the entirety of Hindu traditions and refused to accept any type of sectional Hinduism from the reformers. They also gathered a few supporters from the intelligentsia. Indological researches revealed an apparently 'glorious' picture of Ancient India. The 'Indian Culture' was immensely praised by some European Indologists. This roused another reaction among a section of the English-educated Indians. They began to offer 'scientific' interpretations of everything connected with Hinduism. Even the custom of wearing pigtail was interpreted in terms of science. The conception of an Aryan race beame very popular with the Indians, which led them to believe that they also belonged to the same race of their conquerers.

Still the total religious picture was disappointing. The followers of the reformist sects in their pride of superiority kept themselves aloof from the masses while the orthodox section lived in the world of exaggerated notions. But the common people needed an ideology in their struggle for existence, an ideology which would serve the practical purposes of life and at the same time would overcome the intellectual and spiritual crisis of the age. Such an ideology was supplied by Rāmakṛṣṇa Paramahaṃsa, the Śākta saint, who offered a remarkably broad and synthetic vision of Hinduism and an extraordinarily simple and illuminating exposition of all the ideas of Hindu theology.

Before dealing with Rāmakṛṣṇa's contribution to the cause of society and religion we should say a few words about the Śākta saint heritage of which he was a lineal. We have seen that what is called the Śākta outlook was theoretically established by the Tāntric authors. The Śākta lyrists like Rāmaprasād, Kamalākānta and others elucidated in a very popular way the intricate teachings of the Tantras. There were another group of the spiritual aspirants who preferred to be occupied with

religious practices themselves, rather than with the interpretation of the Tāntric texts. Many of them were even illiterate. Among saints of this class mention may be made of Sarvānanda who flourished in the sixteenth century at Mehar in the district of Tippera. It is stated that all forms of the Divine Mother were revealed to him. The Kālī temple which he established at Mehar is a place of pilgrimage to the peoples of Bengal. His descendants have to this day a large number of disciples all over Bengal. Ratnagarbha or Gosain Bhaṭṭācāryya who flourished towards the close of the sixteenth century, attained liberation in the temple of Digambarī at Mayaisar in the Dacca district. Jayadurgā or Ardhakālī, the female Śākta saint who flourished about the seventeenth century in the Mymensingh district, is believed to have been an incarnation of the Divine Mother. Of similar saints of Mithila reference may be made to Gangeśa Upādhyāya, Devāditya, Vardhamāna and others.

Rāmakṛṣṇa was a spiritual descendant of these Śākta saints of Bengal. We have seen that long before Rāmakṛṣṇa the saintly poet Rāmaprasad had discovered the universal appeal of the Mother cult, and his conception of the relation between the supreme being and the worshipper as that between the mother and her child was further developed by the Śākta saints and lyrists. This shows that from the eighteenth century onwards Śāktism was evolving as a liberal universal religion and this evolution achieved a completeness in Rāmakṛṣṇa who held from his Śākta experience that the aim of all religions was the same and that the difference between the personal and the impersonal god was no more than that between ice and water. The conflict between concrete and abstract, between form and formless, between personal and impersonal, he solved in his own unique synthetic way. Theoretically he believed in the existence of the formless all-pervading Mother, but he did not find any offence in the worship of the image of Kālī, his own personal goddess, since he regarded all forms as mediums leading to the understanding of the formless. He solved the distinction between the so-called deism and theism, between the concrete and abstract conceptions of the supreme being, by postulating the theory of *adhikāribheda* or the individual capability. To him the Brahman and his personal deity Kālī were forms of one reality, the former standing for passivity and inaction and latter for just the reverse.

To his disciples he could impress the idea that the quarrels between different religions arose from over-emphasis on secondary details and that it was owing to this mistaken attitude towards the externals of religion that different sects and communities fought with one another. It was this liberal attitude of Rāmakṛṣṇa, which evolved out of his Śākta experience, helped his disciples, especially the Vivekānanda group, to bring another qualitative change in the interpretation of religion.

Rāmakṛṣṇa could attract around himself a number of noteworthy intellectuals of his day who carried his ideas far and wide. He was introduced to the educated middle class of Calcutta from which section came most of his disciples. But there were other Śākta saints living in distant villages. Mention may be made in this connexion of Vāmācaraṇa, popularly known as Vāmā-Kṣepā whose centre of spiritual activity was Tārāpīṭha in the Birbhum district where he practised meditation from his young age. He was a devotee of Tārā but seldom did he offer any formal worship. To a great extent his views were in agreement with those of Rāmakṛṣṇa. In fact the latter voiced the spiritual demand of his age, and the same voice was also heard from other corners.

A symbolic interpretation of the *Devīmāhātmya* section of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* was offered by Sri Satya Deva in his *Sādhana-Samara* in which he held that the purpose of the *Devīmāhātmya* was to identify the individual soul with the universal soul. The goddess who is Mahāmāyā in the *Devīmāhātmya* is no other than the universal soul, the absolute Brahman. What the *Devīsūkta* of the *Ṛgveda* says with reservation is explained in the *Devīmāhātmya* in the forms of legends. His disciple Vijayakṛṣṇa made an attempt to rationalise the Tāntric conceptions of the ten Mahāvidyās in terms of the doctrine of evolution. It is interesting to note that a similar attempt was made by the poet Hem Chandra Bandyopadhyay in his famous poetry entitled *Daśamahāvidyā*. Since the nineteenth century was the age of reason, there was a tendency of connecting the religious concepts and the Purānic legends with history and science. Nabīn Chandra Sen's trilogy *Raivataka-Kurukṣetra-Prabhāsa* likewise connects the ten Avatāras of Viṣṇu with the ten stages of biological evolution.

In the twentieth century Arabindo Ghosh has interpreted the

doctrine of Śakti in a new light. The Tāntric conception of transforming the mortal and material body into pure and then into divine has been echoed, with greater intellectual comprehension, in Arabindo's conception of the *Life Divine*. According to Arabindo, spiritual quest is the quest of complete existence, and that is not possible by the denial of the existence of the outer world. The higher levels of spiritual attainment cannot be perfect unless the spirit and experience of the higher levels are infused into those of the lower. In his own words: "If in passing from one domain to another we renounce what has already been given us from eagerness for our new attainment, if in reaching the mental life we cast away or belittle the physical life which is our basis, or if we reject the mental and physical in our attraction to the spiritual, we do not fulfil god integrally nor satisfy the conditions of His self-manifestation. We do not become perfect, but only shift the field of our imperfection or at most attain a limited attitude. However high we may climb, even though it be to the non-Being itself, we climb ill if we forget our base. Not to abandon the lower to itself, but to transfigure it in the light of the higher to which we have attained, is true divinity of nature." So long the Divine does not descent upon each level of our entity, we live in the midst of and are guided by the laws of the impure nature. But when that happens, we are guided by the divine laws. The human being then is transformed into a perfect instrument of God. "He would feel the presence of the Divine in every centre of his consciousness, in every vibration of his life-force, in every cell of his body. In all the workings of his force of Nature he would be aware of the working of the supreme World Mother, the Supernature; he would see his natural being as the becoming and manifestation of the power of the World Mother." According to Arabindo, there are two things that come out from all evolutions. One is a *transformation* and the other is a *consequence* of that transformation. The Śakti or Mother is the driving force of all evolutions and hence human entity should be revealed to her so that she may work therein, and this should be done through complete and unconditional surrender to the will of the Mother. "In proportion as the surrender and self-consecration progress the Sādhaka becomes conscious of the Divine Śakti doing the *Sādhanā* pouring into him more and more of herself, founding in him the

freedom and perfection of the Divine Nature. . .And afterwards you will realise that the divine Śakti not only inspires and guides, but initiates and carries out your works; all your movements are originated by her, all your powers are hers, mind, life and body are conscious and joyful instruments of her action, means of her play, moulds for her manifestation in the physical universe . . . . The last stage of this perfection will come when you are completely identified with the Divine Mother and feel yourself to be no longer another and separate being, instrument, servant or worker but truly a child and eternal portion of her consciousness and force. Always she will be in you and you in her; it will be your constant, simple and natural experience that all your thought and seeing and action, your very breathing or moving come from her and hers. You will know and see and feel that you are a person and power formed by her out of herself, put out from her for play and yet always safe in her, being of her being, consciousness of her consciousness, force of her force, *ānanda* for her *ānanda*."[1]

From the middle of the nineteenth century the cult of Śakti began to contribute to the growth of Indian nationalism. The conception of the country in the form of Divine Mother became a strong basis of Indian freedom movement, and this conception was given shape and colour by eminent writers and thinkers. Not all of them were religiously Śāktas, because Śāktism had by this time ceased to be a sectarian religion, and there was no difficulty for anyone to accept its essence. The feeling which they cherished finds a very nice expression in the following words of Arabindo: "Mother India is not a piece of earth; she is power, a godhead, for all nations have such a Devī, supporting their separate existence and keeping it in being." Iswar Chandra Gupta, the first nationalist poet of modern Bengali literature, composed a number of poems, popularising the aforesaid idea, and he was followed by a number of poets like Michael-Madhusudan Dutt, Hem Chandra Bandyopadhyay, Nabin Chandra Sen, Rangalal Bandyopadhyay and others. The real initiator of mother-consciousness in national life, however, was Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay whose *Bandemātaram* anthem,

[1] *M*, 13, 30, 32-33.

in which the country is identified with the *daśapraharṇadhāriṇī* Durgā, is still a source of inspiration to the people of India. This celebrated song occurs in his famous novel *Ānandamaṭha* which is based upon the Sannyasi rebellion that took place in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Following the mother-oriented outlook of the earlier poets, Dwijendralal Ray composed numerous poems glorifying the cultural heritage of India and especially in many of his dramas he pointed out the liberating principles of Śāktism. Even the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, in whom the Śākta religious practices had created a hostile feeling and whose own religious convictions were virtually opposed to the Śākta religion, could not help reflecting the spirit of Śāktism in his nationalistic songs and poems dedicated to the motherland. The tendency of identifying motherland with the Devī or Śakti, although emanated from Bengal, could easily attract the imagination of many a poet in different parts of the country. In Oriya literature this tradition was upheld by Madhusudana Dāsa and others and in Hindi literature the intimate relation between the concept of Śakti and the forces of nationalism is remarkably demonstrated in the poems of Balmukunda Gupta and his followers. Restatement of Purānic themes, centering round Śakti or Devī is found in the writings of Maithili Saran Gupta, Himmat Siṃha, Ramananda Tiwari, Jayasankar Prasad, Suryakanta Tripathi 'Nirālā', Anupa and others. Mummadi Kṛṣṇarājā had translated in Kannada numerous Śākta works evidently for the purpose of bringing a new orientation in the social and religious life of the country. To Subramania Bhāratī, "the incarnate Agastya" of Tamil Literature, Mother India and Mother Tamil were divine realities. In his *Pāñcāli Sapatam* he made Draupadi's predicament in the Kaurava court the symbol of enslaved Mother India's plight. In this work Draupadī is identified on the one hand with Mother India and on the other with the Great Mother, the Parāśakti herself.

The main theme of Bankim Chandra's *Ānandamaṭha*, inspired the Bengali youths to sacrifice themselves during the period of freedom movement. The central plot of the novel moves round a band of revolutionaries who called themselves *santānas* or children who dedicated their everything to the cause of the country. They worshipped their motherland as the goddess Kālī, and in their temple they installed three images of the goddess, repre-

senting respectively, Mother that was, Mother that is and Mother that will be. No other novel so profoundly moved the youths as did this *Ānandamaṭha*. The imagery of the goddess Kālī in the *Ānandamaṭha* leaves no doubt that Bankimchandra owed his inspiration to the Śākta tradition. His own Vaiṣṇavite convictions did not prove any bar in this respect. Likewise Vivekānanda, who inherited from Rāmakṛṣṇa the Śākta-oriented synthetic outlook which helped him to interpret the Vedānta in terms of humanitarian principles, insisted on the cult of Śakti in the programme of national regeneration. He regarded the country as the living image of the Divine Mother and went so far as to state that "for the next fifty years this alone shall be our key-note—this, our great Mother India. Let all other vain gods disappear for that time from our minds."[1] Elsewhere he said: "O India forget not that the ideal of thy womanhood is Sītā, Sāvitrī, Damayanti; forget not that the God thou worshippest is the great ascetic of ascetics, the all-renouncing Śaṅkara, the Lord of Umā; forget not that thy marriage, thy wealth, thy life are not for sense-pleasure, are not thy individual personal happiness; forget not that thou art born as a sacrifice to the Mother's altar; forget not that thy social order is but the reflex of the infinite Universal Motherhood, forget not that the lower classes, the ignorant, the poor, the illiterate, the cobbler, the sweeper are thy flesh and blood, thy brothers. Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian and proudly proclaim, 'I am an Indian, every Indian is my brother'. Say, "The ignorant Indian, the poor and destitute Indian, the, Brāhmana Indian, the Pariah Indian is my brother.' Thou, too, clad with but a rag round thy loins proudly proclaim at the top of thy voice, 'The Indian is my brother, the Indian is my life, India's gods and goddesses are my God. India's society is the cradle of my infancy, the pleasure-garden of my youth, the sacred heaven, the Vārāṇasī of my old age.' Say, brother, 'The soil of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my good', and repeat and pray day and night, 'O Thou Lord of Gaurī, O Thou Mother of the Universe, vouchsafe manliness unto me. O Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and Make me a Man."[2]

[1] *CWV*, III, 301.
[2] *Ibid*, IV, 477 f.

The conception of the country in the form of Divine Mother was of a general character acceptable to all irrespective of caste and creed, and it had evidently enhanced the patriotic feeling among the Indians. But once it was formed it did not remain simply as a patriotic conception. The demand of action leading to freedom introduced revolutionary movements in different parts of India. Secret societies were started in order to propagate revolutionary ideas, collect arms and rise in rebellion. The chief means of propaganda was the publication of books and periodicals to preach the gospel of revolution. "The first book, entitled *Bhavānī Mandir*, published in 1905, gives detailed plan of establishing a religious sanctuary as the basis or centre of revolutionary activities—a temple of the goddess Bhavānī in a secluded spot, far from human habitation, in a calm and serene atmosphere. This was to be the centre of a new order of political devotees. These might or might not become *Sannyāsīs* (ascetics) but were to lead the life of *Brahmacārī* (novice), and would return to the life of a householder only when the object was achieved. This object was the freedom of India from the foreign yoke. The book is a very remarkable one, and lays main stress on the glorification of Kālī under the names of Śakti or Bhavānī, and preaching of the gospel of force and physical strength as the necessary condition for political freedom. The central theme of the work was the organisation of a band of workers who would prepare the way for revolution in India and should have no other attachment in life. There is no doubt that this central idea was taken from Bankimchandra's *Ānandmaṭha* to which reference has been made above, and it is a further evidence of the great influence exercised by that book upon the revolutionary activities in Bengal."[1]

In order to have a simple outline of the origin and multifaraious development of the Śakti cult we have made an attempt, in the present work, to arrange the available materials chronologically, from which it transpires that the role of Śāktism has changed from time to time in accordance with the changing social demands, from the guiding principle of the primitive hunting rituals and agricultural magics to that of the movement of

[1] Majumdar, *HFMI*, II, 269.70.

national awakening, from the esoteric cults and practices arising out of the former to a liberal universal religion which has left a deep impress upon the latter. In between the two there are many turning points, in each of which Śāktism was a driving force, standing for something new, thanks to its flexible nature which made it subject to various interpretations in different ages and by persons and sects belonging to a variety of ideas and beliefs. But a constant characteristic of the Śākta religion, which we must not overlook or underestimate is that, throughout the ages, the Female Principle stood for the oppressed peoples, symbolising all the liberating potentialities in the class divided, patriarchal and authoritarian social set up of India, the rigidity of which was mainly responsible for the survival and development of the opposite principles represented mainly by Śāktism. Chronic insistence upon the authoritarian and patriarchal values by the writers of the *smṛtis* and their violent enforcement in social life by the ruling class contributed indirectly to the survival and development of another set of values quite opposite in character. We do not know whether the Śāktas were really persecuted for their radicalism, but there is evidence to show that attempts were made from different corners to blacken their ideals. But despite all these, the success of Śāktism could not be checked because it had its roots among the masses. It was not a religion preached by any prophet or specially patronised by the royal class or nobility. Its origin was spontaneous which evolved out of the prehistoric Mother Goddess cult symbolising the facts of primitive life, and its development was manifold—not through any particular channel—like a lot of streams, some big some small, issuing from a single glacier, which was also one of the causes of its survival and success.

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INDEX